

Fall 1959

\$1.50

# CRITICISM

*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

## ARTICLES BY

JEAN-JACQUES MAYOUX ON THE SOURCES OF  
SYMBOLISM

LYNN ALTENBERND ON HUCK FINN

ALLAN H. MacLAINE ON BURNS AND PARODY

ANTHONY JACKSON ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHI-  
TECTURE IN ENGLAND

ROBERT F. GLECKNER ON TIME IN *WUTHERING  
HEIGHTS*

CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG ON GRAHAM GREENE

SHERIDAN BAKER ON THE CLICHÉ IN FIELDING

*Reviews by Brewster Rogerson, Northrop Frye, James R. Kreuzer,  
Hugo Munsterberg, and Kenneth Muir*

*Published for the*

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

*by the*

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CRITICISM

*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

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PRICE: \$6.00 a year, \$11.00 for two years, \$16.00 for three years; add \$.15 a year in Canada, \$.35 a year abroad; single numbers \$1.50. Send subscriptions direct to Wayne State University Press.

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Published by Wayne State University Press, 4841 Cass Avenue,  
Detroit 2, Michigan.

Application for second class mail privileges is pending at Detroit, Michigan.

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*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

*volume I, number 4 · fall 1959*

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*This journal was designed by Richard Kinney, set in Janson and Libra type faces, printed on Warren's Old Style Antique and Beckett Cover, and manufactured in the United States of America.*

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*Max F. Schulz, "Keats's Timeless Order of Things"*

*Robert Louis Peters, "The 'Salome' of Arthur Symonds and Aubrey Beardsley"*

*J. A. Ward, "Social Disintegration in 'The Wings of the Dove'"*



*At the Sources of Symbolism*

In my young and immature days, after I had been interested in the symbolist doctrine for some time, it struck me that its sources should be traced to a period earlier than the Romantic vision and to a different quarter. Also, my early interest in Diderot led me to realize that late eighteenth century aesthetic speculation was more complex in its connections and richer in its implications than I had suspected; in fact it was in some ways not so much pre-romantic as post-romantic and pre-symbolist.

The starting point is plain: the English phenomenologists (whether Locke, Hume, or Berkeley is immaterial from our point of view) all laid stress on subjectivity. *Esse est percipi*: that is all we need to know. For symbolist poetry and symbolist fiction, even if they bore the emotional inheritance of Romanticism, differed and still do differ from all Romantic literature because of their intense intellectualism; this is true whether we think of Poe, Joyce, or Eliot. Seen in such a perspective, they can be taken as a literature of suggestion founded on an awareness of psychological processes, of subjective reality; but these processes had come to be one of the centers of interest of eighteenth century rationalist humanism before its decline.

From such a concern and from discoveries of the manner in which the mind works, and more particularly of the ways of the imagination, springs much of Diderot's aesthetics, and perhaps practically all of it if we agree that the *percipiens* is irretrievably the individual, to whom all is therefore relative, so that the *aisthesis* is not only necessarily subjective, but also related to the individual organisation; thus "beauty" ceases to be connected with "central form" and tends to be associated with individual character.

Of all of Diderot's predecessors, none exerted such an overwhelming influence on him as Laurence Sterne, whose *Tristram Shandy* is the admitted model for *Jacques Le Fataliste*. Since the present essay is

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going to be a kind of dialectic movement between Diderot and Coleridge, let me point out a curious connection between such contrasted spirits: these two intensely imaginative and creative minds, so germinal, so full of the unborn future, fed unscrupulously on other people's inventions, absorbed and assimilated them, not as minor but as decisive elements of their own constructions. Thus *Jacques* uses *Tristram Shandy*: it needed this stimulus, perhaps, for Diderot to become completely aware of his own assessment of the novelist's true relation to his fiction. Diderot does not seem to have known Defoe at all; nor would he, probably, have been half so interested in the intensely physical detail of Defoe's reality as he was in the intensely psychological detail of Richardson's. Otherwise he might have been fascinated at least by the extraordinary contrast in just over a generation between *Moll Flanders* and *Tristram Shandy*: the extraordinary victory of the object over the originating subject that is the first, the extraordinary triumph of the all-absorbing subject that is the second. Defoe's rendering of "reality" implied a large amount of faking: by various tricks, he was seeking in fiction for the equivalent of what Stendhal was to term "perfect illusion" in drama, the sudden disappearance of the glass between self and non-self, the near-hallucination, the feeling that "you are there," which is so exhilarating. Sterne would have none of this. His narcissism thrusts on us this implacable truth, that there is no other conceivable reality than our mental representations and that the closest we can get to an absolute, or, rather, to an immediate reality, is by folding the mental representation back upon itself, by a difficult attempt to adhere even briefly to the "here and now," to the present of the writer holding his pen to paper and watching the ink flow.

It is one of the discoveries of the ingenious Laurence Sterne that, psychological laws being what they are, this "here and now" cannot be achieved except against subtly graded or vividly contrasted backgrounds of past or imaginary time: his construction of a time-scape with this immediate foreground is as bold and new as Constable's new range of greens. And what suspense can be achieved between Uncle Toby's beginning to knock out the ashes from his pipe and the end of the operation, what breathless and impossible races to cover an ever-lengthening past and to come abreast with the present. All the rest of Sterne's tricks are subordinated to this. The "here and now" is the only undetermined: as soon as it is determined, it becomes past. Thus here and now is the only freedom, as the master of the here and now, the living writer, is the only free agent, who plays with his puppets, or who, as subject, plays with self as object or as past determination.

I have always been torn between Defoe the pseudo-ingenuous and Sterne the ingenious: so was Diderot, I have always imagined, between the ingenious or sophisticated and the naïve. Sterne had given him the freedom of "what happens inside a human head"; on the other hand there was the irreducible singularity and determination, the fatality, of all that exists. About the ontological nature of reality he is not much concerned: he seems content with separating the subjective "idea" from the objective "fact," and then watching their interplay in that complex real-enough which is Life, where self-identity has at least a marginal meaning. Diderot, the most German of the French (as he was termed, and as Coleridge might be termed the most German of the English), borrowed from his German contemporaries, probably Schiller, the idea of the naïve: "A tree, a flower, a plant, an animal, is naïvely what it is." Naïveté, Diderot goes on, "is a great likeness of the imitation to the thing."<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that he does not simplify and is aware of the obstinate separation and distance between subject and object which can be annihilated only when all awareness is annihilated. The naïveté of the tree is the next best thing: to approximate the self-identity of the tree and yet to increase awareness to the point of consciousness might, judging from the foregoing quotation, have become an important concern of this "inquiring spirit."

Essentially, for him, in aesthetics *esse est percipi*: the image in the human mind is a sufficient quasi-reality, and the problem, for the literary creator, or the philosophical critic, is to find how reality, or the illusion of reality (which is the same), is created in the mind by the manipulation of "ideas." It is very typical of this emphasis on the subjective that a successful fake becomes for Diderot (he should have known Defoe!) a meritorious synonym for truth, in a novel or tale: "How," he asks in *Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne*, "how is this narrator going to proceed, *in order to deceive you?* He will strew his tale with small circumstances so tied up to the thing itself, with such simple traits, so natural and yet so difficult to imagine, that you shall have to admit to yourself: that's the real truth, these things simply couldn't be invented." And in the *Eloge de Richardson* he writes: "Know that it is this multitude of small particulars that creates an illusion: they are hard to imagine; it is harder to render them." Reality, then, is highly organised, infinitely detailed; it is irretrievably singular

<sup>1</sup> In his *Pensées détachées sur la Peinture* he also wrote: "To the simplicity he implied by the word one should join the innocence, the truth, and the originality of a happy unrestrained childhood." Note the curious appearance in this context of childhood.

and characteristic. It is *imperfect*, far away from what Reynolds would term the *central form*. Idealizing art will no longer do. "Let the artist, who has given me an ideal head, perfect in every feature, show me a slight scar on the brow, a wart near one temple, an imperceptible cut in the lower lip, and at once the head becomes a portrait; a small-pox mark next to the eye or the nose, and that feminine head is Venus no longer: it is the portrait of some neighbour." The particulars, then, induce a sense of reality, create the circumstantial reality into which we enter the more readily because it appears as insignificant as that which surrounds us in the flesh. We accept it because we do not feel personally involved, because of its neutrality; gradually we shall become concerned and emotionally involved without our being able to build up a resistance.

One would be tempted to see in Diderot a dialectic of the naïve and the technical if he were not so concerned with the technique of the naïve. Since all happens in the mind (while the *true* naïve should imply mindlessness) the problem of the philosophical critic is to find how it happens, to point out how the artist can make it happen.

The mind creates its "truth" of artistic perception out of a set of signs that vary with each art. Each art has its code outside of which no communication can be effectively achieved, and which defines it in association with a particular range of sensorial data. Literature, however, is different because it produces no objective presentments, no *objects* of art, because it works entirely inside the individual mind. Using a set of peculiarly free signs (words), it transcends all sense data and allows the imagination not only to rebuild and re-create reality as if it might be an object of perception, but to transcend all bounds and to make a reality out of vision. Visionary painting, on the other hand, remains visionary. Diderot's instance is well known: Virgil's description of Neptune rising from the sea with only his great calm head showing above the water carries conviction, but the painter can only put before our eyes an enormous head cut off from its body, awkward, out of scale, absurd. Lucretius can suspend his own and our disbelief long enough for us to have, if not to hold, our vision of Venus with her crown of flaming stars, but the painter can only make a beautiful woman wearing a fine diadem.

In contrast to the straight imitations of the plastic arts, the poet—with each generation the term is of course less specific and more inclusive—handles suggestive *hieroglyphs*. Diderot begins to say in the *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb* of 1761, and goes on saying in various *Salons* (notably that for the year 1767), essays and fragments on

aesthetics, that there is a certain disposition and organisation of words, taken body and soul, sound, rhythm, length, weight, separation and grouping, as well as associative connotations which constitute these hieroglyphs, a suggestive equivalence of reality. The words help the imagination practice a sort of *Einfühlung*. Quoting from *Aeneid* IX, 433-7, Diderot remarks that "*demisere est aussi mou que la tige d'une fleur, gravantur pèse autant que son calice chargé de pluie.*" *It cruor*, he suggests, is analogous both to the spurting blood and to the small movement of the drops of water on flower leaves. "Things are at once said and represented." Such is the hieroglyph. "In a sense," Diderot notes, "all poetry is emblematic." Thus we find that the yearning for expressive symbolic speech, for a perfect and complete fusion of denotation and connotation, which will come to its ultimate fruition in James Joyce starts among the rationalists of the *Encyclopédie*.

Let us now return to the question: What is Diderot's notion of reality, what is his concern with it? We may find we have advanced beyond the initial "*esse est percipi.*" Perception will reveal something more of reality to us than our own organization. It will make us aware that reality is organisation—is *organic*: and that everything, whether human or not, is organically connected. Infinite chains of associations are constantly active, with or without our conscious awareness of them: hence it is that "insignificant" signs bring up with them very considerable realities. This world of ours is all a system of physiognomic signs which long use has trained us to interpret at great speed. The choice and the articulation of key-signs, their representative efficiency and sufficiency, in other words their suggestivity, constitute the essentials of the new gospel of the characteristic which from Diderot onwards tends to supersede the gospel of the beautiful. The beauty of the hunchback, if our perception is trained and acute enough to look for it, is that he is every inch a hunchback, that his nose, chin or little finger are definitely a hunchback's, and can suggest the rest. A straight figure is of course similarly interrelated, but much less strikingly so, and is therefore the less interesting, the less significant because it signifies less and *manifests* less. All aesthetic pleasure being connected with the swift perception of that interrelatedness which runs like a current from part to part of a whole ("You know, my Sophie, a whole is beautiful, as it achieves oneness"), beauty in the old sense does not become altogether void of meaning: to organic cohesion and interrelatedness can be added a more sensuous and more humanistic principle of proportion, rhythm, harmony, which has lasted up to our times as a symptom of academicism.

I have tried to be very precise, less to advance boldly than to cover the ground very carefully. Thus we may see that the metaphysical problem of reality—what the nature or meaning of the Universe in itself may be—has been replaced by the problem of communication, the detection and transmission of signs from mind to mind—the use of expressive language, of an efficient symbolism. The mind is an admirable machine—how happy Diderot would have been if he had lived in the days of cybernetics—and runs with incredible agility along these chains of connections. Its agility grows by use, and by cunning abbreviation of the conscious circuits, by bolder and bolder ellipses, made possible by familiarity, going by the name of intuition. To Diderot, a specific aesthetic intuition of reality has no meaning; it would connect with metaphysical speculation, which has no interest. Plato is shown in *Les Bijoux indiscrets* as haunting the gloomy regions of Hypothesis and as being suddenly terrified by the approach of the giant Experience. The phenomenal world is enough, the empirical exploration of it is enough, and what delight in the workings of the microcosm!

My unborn book of twenty years ago was to be entitled *From Diderot to James Joyce*. To my mature years it appears that there is something meagre, perhaps barren, and after all insufficient in the Diderot tradition; perhaps Stendhal shows this insufficiency in the speculative side of his genius. Like Diderot, Stendhal believed in passion, energy, individual assertion, as much as in intellectual detachment and relentless enquiry into the workings of the mind. He held allegiance to the *idéologues* who linked hands with the Encyclopaedists. Condillac, Cabanis, Helvetius were his masters. Plato was "a poet," mistaken for a philosopher by those sentimentalists whom Stendhal could not bear. He is not interested in the poetic hieroglyph (one should write like Napoleon's Civil Code); but he is so vividly interested in organic relations and their perception that in *Racine et Shakespeare* he identifies dramatic truth not so much with the "*instants d'illusion parfaite*" (in which the spectator—or reader—is by a suspension of disbelief, which may last for a matter of seconds, merged into the pseudo-reality represented before him on the stage or on the page) as with the creation in the mind of parallel processes which lead to the rediscovery of one's own chains of feeling and their stimuli. We ourselves become potentially subjected to these emotional turmoils. In these not very clear, not very convincing remarks, Stendhal is in fact translating from Johnson's *Preface* to Shakespeare: "Imitations produce pain or pleasure not because they are mistaken for realities



but because they bring realities to mind." Again the stimulus is circumstantial, starting a train of associations and quickening the imagination. There is a book of Stendhal which is centrally if not entirely given to the working of mental associations: *De l'Amour*. The dominant image of *crystallisation* is taken from the salt crystals which cover and turn to strange beauty the twigs thrown into the Salzburg mines. It is used by Stendhal to convey the notion of irradiation from a dominant passion into the surrounding world of objects, so that each of those that have been touched and transformed in this way becomes by sheer association a *sign* and a stimulus, capable at best of reviving the passion itself, at least of recreating its emotional condition. "On dirait que par une étrange bizarrerie du coeur la femme aimée communique plus de charme qu'elle n'en a elle-même. L'image de la ville lointaine où on la vit un instant jette dans une plus profonde et plus douce rêverie que sa présence elle-même." Of the wreck of a past love that cannot be recaptured—even in the memory—one of Stendhal's personae seems to have saved only the vivid image of an acacia bush *connected* with the day of its greatest intensity.

Some of Baudelaire's symbolism is descended in a straight line from this *bizarrerie du coeur*; and more of Proust's. But between Diderot and Stendhal on the one hand and Baudelaire and Proust on the other, something has intervened, a change of heart as well as a change of mind.

## II

The ideas of Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the imagination, in its metaphysical as well as aesthetic connections, are so well known as to be almost hackneyed. Yet side by side with Diderot's they still have something to reveal; they illustrate the power of the metaphysical vision over the development, and ultimately over the transformation, of creative literature. And Coleridge is the more significant because he started from the very midst of materialist empiricism by out-Hartleying Hartley with the view that thought itself is corporeal, a motion. The conversion which was finally to settle him in orthodox Christianity is far less significant than the presence, even from the first, and the permanence of a vivid personality determined on wholeness and unity. If thought, if consciousness, is corporeal, then the body, matter itself, is re-integrated into the universe; and thought, consciousness are, once more, not a makeshift of man's but part of the truth of things.

To me, there is a deep affinity between the early mystic materialism

of Coleridge and Milton's Christian materialism, the vision which could describe in *Paradise Lost*.

one first matter all

. . . . .  
But more refin'd, more spiritous and pure,  
As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending

. . . . .  
Till body up to spirit work. . . (V, 472 ff.)

It is deeply significant that in his twelfth *Philosophical Lecture* Coleridge quotes this very passage. The persistence from childhood of a will-to-unity is possibly the most decisive fact about him: cosmic vision, for him as for Blake, was to remain associated with the integrity of childhood. The child built his world out of the *Arabian Nights*, as John Henry Newman was to do some years later, and listened to his father talking of the stars as if it were a tale of wonder. Thus his mind opened itself to a vision of "the great and the whole," which hereafter he forever feared to lose and fought to retain. A principle of activity, soaring as fire, is forever active in his Universe. Nothing is mechanical, or, rather, no mechanism counts, no data of single vision and Newton's sleep, as Blake put it. As soon as he realizes what it is, Coleridge rejects the traditional vision of the association of ideas as dead mechanism.

As rationalism threatened to destroy him, the mystics and occultists, George Fox, Jacob "Behmen," "the pious and fervid William Law," saved him when no orthodox philosophy appeared to have sufficient freshness or newness: "The writings of those mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system." They helped him to "keep alive the heart in the head," and fostered the faith that "all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death." Modern philosophy has left it "to the illiterate and the simple" to investigate "the indwelling and living ground of all things."<sup>2</sup>

The world of phenomena, then—Locke's, Hume's, Hartley's world, Berkeley's too, even Berkeley's—however bustling and crawled over by its busy ant-like columns of associations, having revealed its deadness, Coleridge reconstructs his world from the oldest human tradition, dynamic and sacred: from Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Giordano Bruno, the field of Ideas (it is an ironical co-incidence that after the "ideas"

<sup>2</sup> *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. IX.



that in Locke's or Hume's terminology are the atoms of mental mechanism, should come these) that are "according to Plato and Plotinus constitutive and one with the power and Life of Nature." This universe is dynamic, living and sacred, one which implies and, perhaps, amounts to no more than a living and sacred relation between man and itself. (In any case, it is in opposition to the Aristotelian world, moved by mechanical laws and contemplated from the outside.) In this vision "ideas in the soul of man must necessarily be of the same nature and kind with those laws of the universe which acted upon him . . . What in men the ideas were, those in the world were the laws . . . the very powers which in men reflect and contemplate are in their essence the same which in nature produce the objects contemplated."

The poet, it will be seen, takes all reality to himself as an all-embracing metaphor. All creativeness is in essence the same, whether Nature's, or man's, and consciousness could not exist without kinship with its object: "In the world one thing can act upon another but by some kind of likeness." *Likeness* or analogy: Plato—Coleridge's Plato whose connexion with any of Plato's known or supposed writings is not always very clear—argued that "as there was that power in the mind which thinks and images its thoughts, analogous to this was the power in nature which thought and imaged or embodied its thoughts." This quotation, a mere variation on the foregoing passages, has the striking word "analogy," however. Analogy is the principle of our intuition of reality: there can be no other. This analogy resolves itself into analogies—the symbols:

All that meets the bodily sense I ween  
Symbolical, one mightly alphabet  
To infant minds. . . . (*The Destiny of Nations*)

Symbols it will be seen are man-used but not man-made. They are true communication. "To know is to resemble." This formula Coleridge himself helps us to supplement and clarify in *On Poesy and Art*, which is less Schelling-prompted than coincident with Schelling: "The artist must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure and discourses to us by symbols, the Naturgeist or spirit of Nature, as we unconsciously imitate those whom we love." And again in the *Statesman's Manual*: "That which instinctively it (the Soul) at once beholds and adores . . . that does it tend to become." The creative act of the imagination, which is cognitive in

the truest sense, is also an act of love to this soul, obscured yet full of mystic yearnings.

Such by the power of the Imagination is the "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am," glorified in Chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge has thus defined and characterised not only the Romantic cosmos, but the vision on which we as post-Romantics still live, of Romantic symbolism. The "dynamic system" in literature or art implies the sense of the mystery of being, the desire, effort, failure too, to get in touch with it. The demiurgic obsession of modern art is there, not yet demonic or Faustian: it is part of Coleridge's curious innocence that a formula which parallels the poet's creativeness and God's has in it no challenge, no defiance, and rests on the confident assertion of the singleness and unity of the spiritual principle active in the Universe, whether termed God, *Natura Naturans*, or the creative thought of Man. This world of the neo-Platonist and occultist tradition, this world of Coleridge's and of Blake's, this is the world of "bright reality," of which any perceptible appearance is but a shadow, at best a reflection by which we are aided to a "deeper knowledge of the reality." Let us say, using Blake's language again, that single vision is a help to double vision. The lark of the *Ancient Mariner* and that of *Fears in Solitude* are obviously double vision and curiously different from the numerous rather flat-footed birds of other romantic poets.<sup>3</sup> The notebooks show a mind at a distance from the surrounding "reality" and treating it almost spontaneously like a metaphor. Thus one day from his study he sees a hovering kite; then, as vividly, two kites; but he finds that after seeing the kite he has turned two fluttering leaves into kites. Mere existence tends thus to be absorbed into essential quality.

At this stage, subjective and objective lose their meaning: reality is not even thus localized; the *sense of reality* is in the last resort an

<sup>3</sup> *Ancient Mariner*, ll. 359-365:

I heard the sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are . . .  
And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song . . .

*Fears in Solitude*, ll. 25-28.

And so, his senses gradually wrapt  
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,  
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,  
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

inner sense, a manifestation of "our kindred with essence." This is expressed forcefully in *Anima Poetae*: "In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dimly glimmering through the dewy window pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for a symbolical language, for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new . . . as if these new phenomena were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my own nature." The "symbolical language of Nature" here concerns Nature not as the mask of the Invisible, but rather—probably one should write, but *also*—as a mysteriously ordained set of correspondences for and with the self. Thus we shift from the Romantic to the symbolist vision; which progress, as is true frequently in Coleridge, may be due to an anxious awareness that the breaking of the walls of the self, constantly attempted, is never final, never secure, or perhaps one should say, never *decisive*: "From my very childhood I have been accustomed to abstract and as it were to unrealize whatever of more than common interest my eye dwelt upon, and then by a sort of transfusion and transmission of my consciousness, to identify myself with the object."

How vividly precise this description of poetical and semi-mystic experience is, and how careful and factual. The awareness of, in fact the subjective character of, any such experience is always with him and separates him from Wordsworth's edifying vagueness. Wordsworth may write of "the passions incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of Nature," but Coleridge knows better from experience and can retort "that in the absence of definite mental and moral conditions, innate or acquired natural forms must remain indifferent, or worse, to those that dwell among them." It is this establishing of dynamic relations that is the poet's concern. Let it fail, and the green light that lingers in the West will have no meaning; we shall have the desolate mood of *Dejection*.

### III

Is it not striking that Diderot, a modern unbeliever, should seek his instances of symbolical language in Virgil's description of an already faded and literary Neptune rising from the sea, or in the already unbelieving Lucretius' playing with the poetical figure of Venus with her crown of stars? *Esse est percipi*, whether God or fish. Each one, for Diderot, may create his own Venus: she will be all that matters.

To Coleridge the symbol is only secondarily a matter of successful expressiveness; primarily it is a matter of awareness and implies a

subject and an object in relation, even if the object is the self as an organic part of deeper reality. Such reality can never be reached in a game of illusion (the visions of the Ancient Mariner, the discoveries of Christabel *are* truth). The symbol is living truth.<sup>4</sup> The *Statesman's Manual* reminds us that it "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity of which it is the representative." Such are the means of "the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal." Beauty, in this Romantic-symbolist vision, has nothing to do with the classical "central form" or synthetic perfection, little to do with the intellectualist propositions of a Diderot regarding the suggestion of an interrelated, organic whole by an elliptic pattern of expressive parts. Beauty, in a striking passage of Coleridge's "Principles of Genial Criticism," is presented as "the subjection of matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol, through which the spirit reveals itself." The greatest beauty is achieved "where the most obstacles to a full manifestation have been most perfectly overcome." In other words, it is an epiphany.

The aesthetic vision of a Diderot, or a Stendhal, or any rationalist, is for ever distinguishing, separating. The vision of a Coleridge, or a Blake, is for ever bringing the separate together. Certainly, Diderot draws attention to the power of words, to the freedom of the imagination in poetry, but only in order to stress the specific in each art and its appropriate techniques of expression. It is Coleridge who in the "Principles of Genial Criticism" states, "All fine arts are different species of poetry." He does add of course: "The same spirit speaks to the mind through different senses by manifestations of itself appropriate to each," but the specificity is not what matters. It very much matters whether the poet (be he a painter or a novelist) consciously or instinctively, or merely through following the collective fashion of the time, has the Aristotelian or the Platonist vision: "Dryden could

<sup>4</sup> And living union. There is a tendency now to forage among the wealth of Coleridge's newly published writings. But the *Biographia Literaria* itself is inexhaustible in its vividness of formulation. See especially Chap. XII. After quoting from the fifth *Ennead* ("preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun") as if to put himself in tune, Coleridge goes on, "They and they only can acquire the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its *involutum* for antennae yet to come."

not have been a Platonist. Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Michael-Angelo and Raphael could not have been other than Platonists." With what vividness Coleridge hails and then traces the appearance of this vision in modern art. In the Sienese school still "every figure was imprisoned within its own outline. As soon as Platonism began to dawn . . . then arose Giotto and Cimabue." And in them "with all the awkwardness of composition and stiffness of outline . . . *we find a presence we cannot explain.*"

Our creative arts bathe in this manner in an environment of the *Zeitgeist* which includes pre-eminently a choice of its philosophies, or a prescience of some great vision to come, or an attempt to re-establish some great vision of the past. The occultist world of Forces, passionate intent, and dark conflict, the Platonist world of spiritual unity behind the dust of material appearances, the dynamism that they had in common, had come—come back?—into the eighteenth century before they shone through Romantic poetry. They changed the processes of the Imagination. They made possible the replacement of the static ideogram by the dynamic symbol.

The "dynamic system," as long as Romanticism lasts, provides in exchange for a keener sense of solitude and deprivation a passionate venture towards the principle of power at the heart of things; each symbol is a small attempt at discovery and recovery and union—not with some "object" or other but with being; through some object, or not; hence the significant use in Coleridge's speculations of music, and the truly symbolist language of his references to it. Music is "the gratification which of all others is the best symbol" of the idea. Music "without form, yet contains the principles of form." From Coleridge to Sartre's Roquentin, music and perhaps only music is capable of re-establishing the existent in union with being: "If we sink into music," Coleridge adds, "our childhood comes back with all its hopes and all its obscure reminiscences and with its faith." I have said too definitely perhaps that Coleridge was not concerned with the specificity of the arts, for he can set music against painting, or architecture, and remark "that a great composer, a Mozart, a Beethoven, must have been in a state of spirit much more akin, more analogous to mine when I am at once waiting for, watching and organically constructing and inwardly constructed by, the Ideas, the living Truths that may be re-excited but cannot be expressed by words, the Transcendents that give the Objectivity to all Objects, the Form to all Images, yet are themselves untranslatable into any Image, unrepresentable by any particular Object."

Again this may be taken as a pre-announcement of the symbolist intent to bring all arts nearer to the purity of music. "Music is to fragrance as Air is to Water," Coleridge notes, in the spirit of "correspondences." It is also the spirit of metamorphosis. Far from destroying the reality of appearances, this vision at last makes them real and vividly intense. Blake's *Ghost of a Flea* is horribly alive. So is Coleridge's insect, framed in a vision of Insectdom that inspires an astonishing prose poem:

All offering that is truly sacrificial, id est hallowing . . . proceeds from and is preceded by the act of yearning, desiderium.

Yearning offers up, resigns itself, passes wholly into another desire, seizes hold of, draws to itself, devours, ravishes and in its fiercest form (hornet devouring peach) *ravages*. . . .

The insect is the incarnation of the dissipated contractive corrosive power of the Air . . . the minister of the Antipathy of Air to Earth. . . .

As the Plant, of Love, Yearning and Sacrifice,—so is the Insect the Symbol of Appetite, Desire—Lust hard by hate. Manifold motions making little speed. And to deform and kill the things whereon they feed.

Of the Bird Coleridge has a similar vision, which reminds me of the writing of Antonin Artaud. The Bird is "the Union of Plant and Insect . . . glorified by the interpenetration and by the potentiation of ascending intensity of Life. Hence the feathery vegetation of the Birds—the rich Colors and a substitute for the fragrancy of the Plants. For as the Bird is the symbol of Air in its emancipation from water and therefore the continuous and dilative Hydrogen must give way to the contractive distinctive Oxygen and to the volatile self-projecting dispersive Nitrogen, the Carbon becomes the mediator—we have Light in the form of Gravity in Color. . . ."

We are not dealing with a philosopher concerning whom we might examine what debt he owes to this or that predecessor and finally what right he has to be considered as an originator in the field of speculative thinking. We are dealing with a creator, searching with passionate intentness the mystery of his own creation, of his own creativeness too, of his condition as he is thus active, of what the act of imagination means both in itself and to himself, of its value as cognition—as revelation of truth. No philosophical system proper, whether Schelling's or anybody else's, could have the same import as this introspection into art lived, which at the same time is so much



more than the observation of a process: the interpretation of *poetical experience*.

#### IV

Neither Coleridge's symbolist vision, nor Keats's, was to be at all followed up in English prose of the period, apart from that oddity, De Quincey, whose pseudo-poetic "prose of power" is less interesting than the sudden ecstasies, in *The English Mail Coach*, the *Confessions*, or less likely places like "The Spanish Military Nun," in which suddenly reality becomes transfixed and assumes a singular quality, an empty echoing dimension out of space and beyond time, timelessness indeed, a kind of hanging suspense as of the incredibly poised crest of a wave refusing to come down. With such attempts something new enters the human vision and haunts the imagination: metaphor in the old form is dispensed with, and the presentment of "reality" itself seeks to convey an essential character through the alteration of appearance, and a sudden suspense and anguish attaching to it. We find here the beginning of what Samuel Beckett, in his precious essay on Proust, calls, in opposition to Baudelaire, *auto-symbolism*.

But De Quincey, with the Germanic background and the unholy chain of opium to bind him to Coleridge, is an oddity, and the main stream of prose, particularly prose-fiction, in England, is for two generations away from such tendencies. It is in America that prose symbolism, of a different sort, will develop in Hawthorne and Melville, and in Poe. Poe is distinct from the other two, and to me his obsessive visions fall rather short of symbolical status. Hawthorne and Melville are curious puritanical throwbacks, almost medieval inasmuch as their symbolism constantly tends to allegory—the very opposite of autosymbolism or symbolical irradiation of reality. Instead of an overcharge of reality, what we seem to get from them is a strange vivid devitalisation through which the transient is ever shown as the mask of eternal. De Quincey and Coleridge to a lesser degree are presences at the back of Melville's mind. But in any case a near-Platonist denial of material reality is endemic in these puritanical lands.

The neo-Platonist vision is in the same proportion rare in France even while Romanticism takes root and grows there (Stendhal, for example damns Plato as a poet). But Stendhal is in fact an eighteenth-century man juggling with the notion of romanticism in telling manner. Balzac is vehemently, desperately, absurdly of his time, and tells a very different tale. Even when these men seem to hold a notion in common, like that of individual energy, it is only the word that is common to

them. Stendhal's energy, even though doomed to failure like that of Julien Sorel, is heroic; Balzac's is more typically that of Vautrin, daemonic, in touch with the powers of darkness, embodying and manifesting spiritual forces in conflict. When Balzac seems to echo Diderot, it is from another world, as when in *Louis Lambert* he too talks of the power of words, those "hieroglyphs" ("les mystères enfouis dans toute parole humaine"): "N'existe-t-il pas dans le mot VRAI une sorte de rectitude fantastique?" All words—verbs, as he says—are to him "empreints d'un vivant pouvoir qu'ils tiennent de l'âme et qu'ils lui restituent par les mystères d'une action et d'une réaction merveilleuse entre la parole et la pensée." Louis Lambert is a seer, "un voyant." Like him, Balzac fed his feverish adolescence on Jacob Boehme, and Ste. Thérèse, Mme. Guyon, and the Swedenborg of *Heaven and Hell*. Whether all is spirit or all is matter is to his vivid apprehension of dynamic unity meaningless: "The painfulness of waiting is due to the working of the law according to which the weight of a body is multiplied by its speed"; "perfumes may be ideas." Or in the occultist tale *Seraphita*: "Man creates no forces: he makes use of the only one that exists, the sum of everything else: motion, the inexplicable breath of the sovereign creator of the worlds." But there are in certain human beings incredible daemonic concentrations of power, able to gain them mastery over their fellow-men, by acting on them somewhat like a drug, like opium, "which puts the body to sleep, but unbinds the spirit, which is free to hover over the world." Swedenborg is the true hero of the tale, which, while differing vividly from Balzac's realistic *Comédie Humaine*, reflects very closely some of his obsessive thoughts. Balzac's world, whether in the *Comédie Humaine* or in such a phantasy, is an enormous system of signs, in which the physiognomy of men and the physiognomy of things interchange their meanings and portents: "As Swedenborg said, the Earth is a Man." Balzac's world is everywhere a world of anguish, suffering, spiritual conflict.

As we turn from Balzac to Flaubert, it seems as if we are back again with the school of Diderot, vividly modern, astutely, cunningly technical, working from the head, giving the meaning of our own structures to an otherwise senseless, absent world. To Flaubert as to Diderot, the writer or artist seems to be no seer of visions, no prophet, but a skilful conjurer, manipulating his sense-data with clever legerdemain, distracting our attention the while, until, lo, the very rabbit appears. Hence the stubborn emphasis in the *Correspondence* on literary technique, as distinct from any other. Hence, as in the *Lettre sur les*



*Sourds-Muets* and the *Salon de 1767*, the dissociation of literary suggestion, free and limitless, from pictorial definition. The proposal that there should be an illustrated *Salammbô* infuriates him: they "would come and destroy my dream with their ignoble precision!" "My dream?" *Your* dream of course: for "as soon as the type is fixed by the pencil it loses that character of generality, that agreement with a thousand known objects, which makes the reader say, 'I have seen it.'" The picture must be replaced, once again by the hieroglyph; the visible imitation of the appearance of reality gives place to the secret imitation of its structure.

Whoever cares to compare the successive states of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* will be illuminated. In the first version there is a description of the white marble tower that rises from the outer wall of the Temple of Bel, precise and naïve as in a medieval travel book—200 ells high, 50 wide. In the third version, we read: "From the North-wall rises a tower." Dream? the word is made good, here and elsewhere. Flaubert tends to the immediate concreteness of dreams through the breaking up of chrono-logic, which turns the familiar narrative succession of appearances into apparitions of sheer reality:

*Apollonius:* After Ctesiphon we entered the lands of Babylon.

*Damis:* And the satrap uttered a cry on seeing such a thin man.

. . . . .  
The king gave me a parasol and told me: "I have by the Indus a stud-farm of white camels. When you do not want them any more, blow into their ears. They will return."

. . . . .  
By the seaside we met the baboons drunk with milk.

All the missing links were in the first version: the guards that took Apollonius to the Satrap, the king's mentioning that Apollonius should take as many of the white camels as he needed, the arriving at the seashore. But the phrases, "We turned right," and "the North-wall," bearing in unspecified infinite space, partake of the sacred and the oneiric. The immediate presence of reality without logical or chronological preparation or links is part of the terror and the preciousness of dreams. Mediated by logic, compelled to submit to our categories, reality becomes practical, livable: it has in the process disappeared, become assimilated to ourselves. Flaubert's concentration on the technique of suggestion restores it. As far as the inexplicable immediacy of dreams is concerned, Kafka will have nothing to add to the Flaubert

of parts of the *Tentation*, except perhaps—subtlest of all accomplishments—the grey neutrality of language.

But can we say more? Can we gainsay our first impression? Can we say that this prophet of aesthetic “*réalisme*” is not only a master of symbolist technique, but also a true symbolist, seeking through some sort of double vision to reach a closer awareness of the nature of the universe? The *Correspondence* makes fascinating reading because of sudden hints and intimations. Flaubert appears mostly as a mystic of language, of “style,” which culminates in this extraordinary pronouncement in January 1852, even as he is writing *Madame Bovary*: he wishes to write “un livre sur rien . . . qui se tiendrait de lui-même par la force interne de son style . . . les oeuvres les plus belles sont celles où il y a le moins de matière . . . cet affranchissement de la matérialité se retrouve en tout.” Style, then, is “an absolute manner of seeing things.” It requires detachment, distance from the object. It is better not to feel too much about what you are about to express. “You will succeed the better in expressing it as it is—as it is ever in itself, in its generality, disengaged from all its ephemeral contingencies—so long as you are capable of making yourself feel it.”

What then is the thing as it is ever in itself, in its generality, disengaged from all its ephemeral contingencies? Is it the old classical ideal or central form of the thing, the rational residue of its concrete existential form? We are in doubt, till on 27 March 1853, the decisive formula occurs, as if *en passant*: “Form is the very flesh of thought, as thought is the soul of life.” And now reading *Louis Lambert* upsets and overwhelms Flaubert; he recognizes himself in these mystic fevers, and remembers a projected metaphysical novel, about a man who thinks himself into visions of his lost friends. Like Louis Lambert, “I have,” he says, “frequently felt my soul escaping from me.” And suddenly, in the autumn of the same year, while the great “*réaliste*” masterpiece is taking shape, this other formula occurs: “Genius, after all, is perhaps only a refinement upon sorrow, that is, a meditation of the objective through our soul.” As in a Wagnerian opera we hear the music shape a certain *motiv*, we become aware here that a certain hero is about to appear; we seem to sense Plato “in the air”: “Mountains, for Michael-Angelo, had a soul . . . it was something like the sympathy of two analogical elements.”

Thus we move nearer, till we read of “the indefinable beauty that comes from the splendor of the true, as Plato said.” And Flaubert blames Leconte de Lisle for not being enough of a Romantic, for not seeing deep enough into the heart of the object. We shall never get

from him more than these hurried hints, in the midst of his obsession with technique. They make it sufficiently evident that Flaubert has felt the far-reflected glow of the Platonic vision. His own vision, whether in *Madame Bovary* or the *Tentation*, is I think shown more truly and significantly by that light. Flaubert's reality is only the realist's in appearance; his symbols are already a symbolist's, even if he is a symbolist *qui s'ignore*. In fact with him Diderot's games of make-believe have been caught into a more serious, more intense system of meanings. Flaubert's disciples in the Anglo-Saxon literatures, James, Conrad, Joyce, may have thought as they entered their symbolist vision that they were reacting against him. They were merely carrying on the self-same search in its true field.

## *Huck Finn, Emancipator*

Almost all recent commentators on Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have concentrated on the rather obvious inferiority of the novel's final sequence by recording their dissatisfaction with its farcical tone, its abrupt decline from the high moral seriousness of the first four-fifths of the novel, and its apparent thematic irrelevance. The purpose of this article is to show that the final episode is the thematic climax of the novel because the rescue of Jim from the cabin is an allegory representing the Civil War.

A number of themes and kinds of subject matter receive parallel—and occasionally intersecting—simultaneous development. I take it that at the most abstract and general level Twain is dramatizing the disparity between appearance and reality and between pretense and actuality. Within this coarse-textured pattern he is examining several more concrete and specific problems. He produces, throughout the novel, a panorama of Southern society which is also an epitome of human relations everywhere. In addition, he is depicting the struggle of an unspoiled youth to escape from the debilitating conventions of a society corrupted by self-seeking and self-deluding pretense. As he exposes this pretense Twain implicitly champions enlightened modern attitudes which we have come to call pragmatism and empiricism, as alternatives to the foolish old romantic sentimentality that diverts attention from the ugliness, hollowness, and cruelty of contemporary life. Finally and most specifically, Twain is commenting on the place of the Negro in an American society governed, North and South alike, before the Civil War and after, by ideas of white supremacy. These themes are introduced and explored to some extent in those portions of the novel written before Twain's trip back to the Missis-

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sippi in 1882.<sup>1</sup> In the portions clearly written after the river journey, and hence presumably under its influence, the same themes are developed further, with the difference that the problem of the Negro gains prominence and is dealt with specifically and pointedly.

The concluding sequence of the novel is indeed tedious and overingenious. At the Silas Phelps farm, Tom Sawyer, reintroduced into the scene after an absence happily lasting through twenty-nine chapters, takes the lead in a boy's make-believe rescue of Jim, the imprisoned runaway slave. The idyll of the great river is all behind us now; the amusing and exciting journey through middle-Southern society has bogged down in a muddy farmyard; the tense and earnest struggle to rescue a human being from the absent-minded savagery of his "superiors" has apparently degenerated into a feather-headed boys' game in which all the prizes are imaginary. Yet in the Phelps plantation episode the varied themes of the novel coalesce. The resolution of the Negro problem is frustrated at a literal level by the inflexible conditions of pre-Civil War slave-holding society and at a symbolic level by the persistence into a practical post-war industrial age of pre-war Southern sentimentality. This very frustration is the novel's comment on American society and on the human condition. The final episode becomes clear if we understand that Tom's elaborate romantic scheme for releasing Jim from the cabin is a microcosmic parody of the Civil War.

The problem, abstractly stated, is that of freeing the slave. It would be easy enough, of course, to fling open the cabin door and let Jim walk out into the sunshine a free man; yet Tom conceals his knowledge of Jim's freedom. This is simply an allegorical way of saying that the conditions for the slave's freedom had already existed before the Civil War, and that the South could have acknowledged this fact and turned him loose. But common sense, represented in the allegory by Huck's straightforward pragmatism, was overruled by the chivalric nonsense of a Scott-inspired populace, represented by Tom's romantic shenanigans. As a consequence, the glamorous adventure of the Civil War was undertaken in resistance to a forthright acknowledgment of the Negro's humanity. The result of Tom's scheme—the result of the Civil War—is a freedom for the Negro that is specious and temporary.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Blair, "When Was *Huckleberry Finn* Written?" *AL*, XXX (March, 1958), 1-25, introduces new evidence to suggest that the 1882 trip had less influence on the writing of *Huck Finn* than has heretofore been supposed. In effect, Blair's evidence shows that Twain's interest in themes introduced early in the book was independent of the quickening influence of the 1882 experience.

Whatever else it may be, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a raucous hooting down of romantic falsehoods, which were used for various purposes including the justification of Negro bondage. Moreover, it is an appeal for recognition of the Negro's humanity and a commentary on the status of the nominally freed Negro in post-Reconstruction America.

Twain's task naturally divided itself, then, into two parts. He must first expose to ridicule the romantic sentimentality which dominated the outlook of the nineteenth century and which commended idiocy and cruelty in the name of piety and justice. Then he must show convincingly that the Negro is worthy of the freedom he has been denied. The first of these considerations explains the thematic relevance of those episodes not directly involving Jim, for here Twain is shaking down the false façade of Southern "culture" by exposing the actuality beneath ridiculous pretensions. In Tom's attack on the A-rabs, in the futile efforts to reform Pap Finn, in the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, in the shooting of Boggs, in the Peter Wilks swindle, the focus is on varieties of sentimental pretense and self-delusion, all of which come to bear on what Howells once called "the Southern inversion of the civilized ideals in behalf of slavery." At the outset, no very great issues appear to be at stake, but quickly it becomes evident that romantic nonsense and sentimentality—usually fused into a single tearful attitude—are the ornamental camouflage for inhumane violence. The crowning delusion exploded by Huck's unconscious skeptical pragmatism is that of the Southern planter aristocracy in believing itself to be a chivalric society worthy to rule an Athenian democracy resting on the South's peculiar institution.<sup>2</sup> By extension, Twain is exposing the pretense of superiority founded on birth, social position, or race whenever and wherever it appears. The second job, that of demonstrating the worth of the Negro, Twain accomplishes in the episodes where Jim is on stage, showing through dramatic and emotional means, rather than by logical argument, the real nobility of at least one Negro. Finally, Twain brings these two themes together by showing that when sentimentality and chivalric romanticism are applied to the problem of freeing the enslaved Negro, the result is a gaudy escapade that produces only a fraudulent imitation of freedom.

In the passages detailing Jim's release from the cabin, it is fairly

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the role of sentimentality in resisting reform, and especially abolition, see Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America* (Durham, N. C., 1940).

clear that Huck brings to the job a straightforward, common-sensical, pragmatic view. At every turn he wants to cut through difficulties in the simplest and most direct manner, and above all, he will judge the value of any scheme by its results. "When I start in to steal a nigger," he tells Tom, "... 'I ain't no ways particular how it's done so it's done. What I want is my nigger; ... and I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther.'"<sup>3</sup> Tom, on the other hand, rejects every simple, effective plan on the grounds that it is not troublesome and glorious enough. Completely unconcerned about any discomfort or danger he may occasion for himself and Huck—or for Jim—Tom insists on following the magnificent example of Ivanhoe and the Count of Monte Cristo. Clearly Tom embodies here the outworn romantic falsification of life that Twain ridiculed throughout his career. These roles Twain develops from the earliest stages of the novel. Whether he planned the contrast between Huck and Tom from the outset, or whether he simply seized upon a useful opposition already established when he came to devise the concluding episodes is ultimately irrelevant; the divergence of attitude between the two boys could hardly have been sharper.

When Tom Sawyer organizes a gang dedicated by secret oaths to deeds of bloody violence, Huck's empiricism comes into play. Using "pirate-books and robber-books" as his guide, Tom leads raids on treasure caravans that look to Huck's unschooled eye like droves of hogs and Sunday-school picnics. Furthermore, Tom's recipe for conjuring up a genie fails the test of experimental verification: "I got an old tin lamp and an iron ring, and went out in the woods and rubbed and rubbed till I sweat like an Injun, ... but it warn't no use, none of the genies come" (p. 20, end of Ch. III). Nothing very serious appears to be at stake in Huck's impatience with Tom Sawyer's make-believe, but these opening scenes do establish the attitudes that will be contrasted throughout the novel: book-bred romantic nonsense is exposed by pragmatism, skepticism, and empiricism, or simply by unaffected truth-telling.

Once Huck's characteristic approach to life is established, Twain uses it liberally to expose the follies of humankind as they are represented in the Mississippi River microcosm. Huck can see that the efforts to reform Pap Finn are doomed to failure because they are

<sup>3</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Author's National Edition (New York, 1899), p. 341 (beginning of Ch. XXXVI). Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.



based on sentimentality rather than on honest realism, and he is pragmatist enough to flee from a piety that would deliver him into Pap's hands out of reverence for the *a priori* proposition that a child should not be separated from its father. Again, Huck's literal honesty exposes the hypocrisy of old Finn's tirade on the treatment of a freed Negro—a parody of white supremacy attitudes which is not only a device for characterizing the old man, but also an important buttressing of the attack on oppression of the Negro. At Colonel Grangerford's, in the Boggs affair, through all the chicaneries of the Duke and the King, and finally at the Phelps farm, either Huck's practical skepticism or his naïve honesty serve as the measure of sham and foolishness.

Tom's alternative outlook is equally clear, but its representative character requires demonstration. It is my contention that Tom Sawyer represents in little the romantic delusion of the Southern "quality." His reverence for doing things according to the book and his fascination with ritual are a foreshadowing of the Grangerfords' punctilious observance of the *code duello*, with the difference that in the adult world freedom and life itself are at issue. The Grangerfords, in turn, epitomize the Southern slaveholding aristocracy who fancy themselves to be following the code of romantic chivalry so winningly depicted in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Like Tom Sawyer, they are play-acting.

Here a re-examination of certain passages in *Life on the Mississippi* will be useful. Throughout his treatment of Southern "culture" and Southern conduct, Twain contends that the South exhibits a nauseatingly sentimental false picture of itself, and that this delusion is induced by the reading of romantic story-books, especially those of Sir Walter Scott. That is to say, he attributes the same distemper and the same cause of it both to Tom Sawyer and to the ante-bellum South. In Chapter XL of *Life on the Mississippi*, "Castles and Culture," Twain hoots at the "whitewashed castles" of Southern architecture, inspired by Scott, who had "run the people mad, a couple of generations ago [i.e., before the Civil War], with his medieval romances." Then Twain continues: "The South has not yet recovered from the debilitating influence of his books. Admiration of his fantastic heroes and their grotesque 'chivalry' doings and romantic juvenilities still survives here, in an atmosphere in which is already perceptible the wholesome and practical nineteenth-century smell of cotton factories and locomotives; and traces of its inflated language and other windy humbuggeries survive along with it." A page later he adds: "By itself the imitation castle is doubtless harmless, and well enough; but as a



symbol and breeder and sustainer of maudlin Middle-Age romanticism here in the midst of the plainest and sturdiest and infinitely greatest and worthiest of all the centuries the world has seen, it is necessarily a hurtful thing and a mistake."<sup>4</sup> "Maudlin Middle-Age romanticism" may be only ludicrous when it leads to the lath-sword play of Tom Sawyer's gang, but the same delusions in the Grangerfords lead to the mindless violence of the feud and to the usurpation of rights that is the slave system. Indeed Twain makes a close connection between Southern romance and Southern violence when he appends newspaper accounts of four fatal armed encounters involving "gentlemen" in various parts of the South as a footnote to his quotation of the prospectus of a Kentucky "Female College" (pp. 334-336). Thus it is not surprising that in a later chapter of *Life on the Mississippi*, in which Twain charges Scott with having halted and turned backward the nineteenth-century wave of progress set in motion by the French Revolution and by Bonaparte, he also adds that "a plausible argument might be made out" that "Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war" (Ch. XLVI, pp. 375-376). That is to say, the Civil War was fought because of the romantic, "chivalric" temper of the Southern people, a temper nowhere better embodied than in Tom Sawyer.

In addition to reviling romantic sentimentality, Twain undertook a gradual revelation of the Negro's humanity through his portrait of Jim. Note that this is genuinely a revelation rather than a growth in Jim, for all the noble traits that are dramatically revealed as the raft journey progresses are evidently present in him before the trip begins, and similarly we have no warrant to suppose that the ignorance and vanity he shows in the early chapters are educated out of him. What actually happens is that Huck, who has had only the white boy's view of the Negro, and relatively little of that, comes gradually through experience to know Jim's real worth and hence to give prominence in his narrative to whatever is his dominant impression at any given stage of the voyage.

This is the extent of Huck's moral growth, for in a justly celebrated

<sup>4</sup> *Life on the Mississippi*, Author's National Edition (New York, 1899), pp. 332-334. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition. That Twain had long been scornful of fake medievalism is shown by the item headed "The Tournament in A. D. 1870" in his "Memoranda" column in the *Galaxy* for July, 1870. Here Twain ridicules Southern tournaments in imitation of the Ashby-de-la-Zouche encounter in *Ivanhoe*.

passage, he struggles long with his civilized conscience before he overcomes it and decides to "steal" Jim out of slavery again. For this conscious, obdurate violation of the property laws that have been recommended to his respect by teacher, aristocrat, and preacher alike, he supposes that he will go to hell. That is to say, he has not become, and never does become, a conscious and articulate critic of the ethics of slave society. To the very end he can be amazed and chagrined that Tom Sawyer, a boy of the "quality," can so lower himself as to become a "nigger-stealer," and he can submit to the indignities of Tom's leadership in the freeing of Jim, even though in such an enterprise he is interested in results, rather than in "style." This satire on the South's notions of "quality" and "chivalry" is possible only because Huck does *not* develop a moral intelligence superior to that of the society that grudgingly bred him.

At the beginning of the novel, Jim appears to be a proper target for the boys' practical jokes. Indeed, he appears to be pretty much what popular notions unenlightened by intimate acquaintance with the Negro hold him to be: ignorant, superstitious, and vain. But on Jackson's Island Huck finds in Jim a friend, a source of strength and wisdom, and, eventually, a comrade in peril. The true "community of saints," as Lionel Trilling aptly calls the companions on the raft, has not yet been established, however. When Huck's prank with the rattlesnake has unexpected and serious consequences, he conceals his trick because he has not yet acknowledged in the Negro the humanity that would warrant admitting responsibility to him. Later Huck finds another opportunity to fool poor old Jim by pretending that the whole mishap of their separation in a fog is a bad dream Jim has mistaken for actuality. In this instance, Huck acknowledges Jim's human status, for he admits responsibility, not only to himself, but to Jim as well.

The climax of Jim's elevation to full humanity in Huck's—and the reader's—eyes occurs at the end of Chapter 23, "The Orneriness of Kings." Huck finds Jim "moaning and mourning to himself," presumably for his lost wife and children. The boy's growing, but still incomplete, knowledge of the Negro's humanity is summed up in his observation, "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so. . . . He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was." The point is then dramatized in Jim's acknowledgment of his own guilt for ignorant mistreatment of his deaf and dumb child: "' Oh, she was plumb deaf en dumb, Huck, plumb deaf en dumb—en I'd been a-treat'n her so! '"

(pp. 215-216, end of Ch. XXIII). Without further comment by Huck, this statement stands at the end of the chapter as an eloquent tribute to the humble humanity of the slave.

Twain's sympathetic portrait of Jim undoubtedly grew out of his own experience with slaves during his Missouri boyhood, but it may also have been partly shaped, in the late chapters, by Twain's friendship with George Washington Cable. In his *Twins of Genius*, Guy A. Cardwell reviews the relationship between Twain and Cable from 1881 to 1885, and suggests that Cable may have influenced the picture of Southern society that Twain formed during the final period of work on the manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn*. Cardwell points out that after exposure to Cable's ideas, Twain picked up the writing of *Huckleberry Finn*, discarded a considerable part of the already existing manuscript, and moved ahead with renewed vigor, not only because he had had his interest revived by the 1882 trip back to the river, but also because he had now found a theme.<sup>5</sup>

I would go one step further and suggest not only that Cable's general attitudes were influential in coloring *Huck Finn*, but also that the ideas dramatized in the novel, and especially in its last portion, are specifically those that Cable was developing immediately before and during the period of his closest friendship with Twain. In the 1870's Cable became interested in the plight of the Negro in the South. He spoke on various subjects relating to Negro welfare, and succeeded in making himself thoroughly unpopular in his own region. In 1884 he drew together his leading ideas in an essay which remains his classic statement on the subject, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," published in January, 1885, in *Century* magazine.<sup>6</sup> An examination of that essay is worthwhile for the interesting parallels of its leading ideas to themes in *Huckleberry Finn*.

The Negro has been kept in subservience, Cable says, because the Southerner has insisted on continuing to regard him as an alien, and as a menial. During Reconstruction the effort to alleviate the condition of the freedman had evidently brought about some moderation

<sup>5</sup> Guy A. Cardwell, *Twins of Genius* ([E. Lansing, Mich.], 1953), pp. 68-77. Professor Cardwell's conclusions should be somewhat modified in the light of Professor Blair's suggestions about the dates of composition of *Huckleberry Finn*.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Cardwell. For a full and authoritative treatment of Cable's views on the Negro question, see Arlin Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham, N. C., 1956), especially pp. 194-207. A shorter statement is Edmund Wilson, "The Ordeal of George Washington Cable," *New Yorker*, Nov. 9, 1957, pp. 172-216.

of these views; but now, in 1884, when it is acknowledged that Reconstruction has been a failure, and when the efforts to re-establish civil society in the former slave states have been returned to the hands of Southerners, a crisis in freedmen's affairs has arisen, and the old notions of the alienism and meniality of the Negro have had a revival. The Civil War granted only a nominal freedom to the slave; anyone who candidly examines his status in the South of the 'eighties will have to admit that the freedman is not free. But, Cable goes on, armies and fleets cannot enforce freedom for any man; only a change of mind and heart can free the Negro, and that change must be brought about voluntarily by the South itself.<sup>7</sup>

This summary of Cable's essay is an almost exact statement of the theses dramatized in the concluding fifth of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Tom's scheme—the Civil War—does not really free the slave. He has fallen back into captivity because of his loyalty to a wounded South. Even if Jim had struck out for free territory, his chances of reaching it through hundreds of miles of hostile country infested by slave-hunters and bloodhounds are almost worthless. So too, the Southern slave has not gained his freedom by being turned out of doors in a hostile post-Civil War society. What actually frees Jim, and what will actually free the nominally emancipated slave, is a voluntary act of human love. Huck, in his gradual recognition and acknowledgment of Jim's human condition (his acknowledgment that Jim is *not* "menial" and "alien"), and Miss Watson in her voluntary gesture of freeing Jim in her will, have achieved the changes of mind and heart that will recognize the Negro as fully human and make him a free man. Miss Watson's behavior does indeed seem improbable, but it is certainly no more improbable than the kind of behavior needed to give the freedman of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction days the full status that his humanity and his suffering entitle him to.

One further consideration broadens the applicability of the novel. I would suggest that Twain uses the South as the locale of his drama because the actual physical bondage of the Negro in pre-war days lends itself to the concrete symbolization of the inferior position occupied by the post-Reconstruction freedman. In addition, the South's romantic masquerade represents in aggravated form the delusion of self-styled aristocrats everywhere. But I see no warrant for assuming

<sup>7</sup> George W. Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," *The Silent South* (New York, 1885), pp. 1-38.

that Twain was limiting his criticism to a specific region; he was exposing the "damned human race" generally and the white-supremacy myth specifically wherever it existed; in addition, he was addressing a primarily Northern audience when portions of the novel first appeared in the *Century*.

This reading of the novel emphasizes its thematic unity by accounting for all of its incidents, including the admittedly inept but reasonably conceived conclusion. What is more, it establishes the relevance of the novel to the problems of the day when it was published; indeed, in view of Cable's contention that a crisis had arisen in freedmen's affairs in 1884, Twain may have intended the book to be specifically topical and timely. *Huckleberry Finn* is not, as has been charged, a dishonest book because it makes a valiant attack on a dead issue, nor is its conclusion an evasion of the moral issues of slavery and of the post-Civil War slave-holders' mentality. It faces the hard fact that, whatever legislation or arms may accomplish, the Negro can finally be freed only by the freely given love of his captors.

## *Burns's Use of Parody in "Tam O'Shanter"*

Among the poems of accepted greatness which have remained largely unexplored by critics is Burns's *Tam O'Shanter*. Here is a work which has delighted and enthralled countless readers for more than one hundred and fifty years; yet no one until David Daiches in his *Robert Burns* (1950)<sup>1</sup> had ever tried to explain in detail how *Tam O'Shanter* works its unique magic. As a matter of course, the poem has been totally ignored by that large class of critics who seem to feel that a work which has no solemn message for the reader, no elaborate symbolism, and no abstruse philosophical meanings to be interpreted is unworthy of scholarly consideration. Even so, *Tam O'Shanter* has never lacked commentators; on the contrary, it has had scores of them. Every one of the numerous writers on Burns has something to say about this poem which Burns himself considered his "standard performance in the Poetical line."<sup>2</sup> The critical response, however, has also been "standard." Commentators explain the local allusions and underlying folklore, and praise the work in repetitious, general terms. They say, in effect, that the poem is magnificent, but fail to elucidate the complex and masterly poetic techniques which make it so.

Just why is *Tam O'Shanter* so effective and memorable? David Daiches has taken us a long way toward the answer in his fruitful analysis of the poem. Here Daiches stresses, quite properly, the broader

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<sup>1</sup>(New York), pp. 280-292. An interesting but less penetrating analysis of the poem has recently appeared in Christina Keith's *The Russet Coat: A Critical Study of Burns' Poetry and of its Background* (London, 1956), pp. 93-103.

<sup>2</sup> See Burns's letter to Mrs. Dunlop, Apr. 11, 1791, in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. DeLancey Ferguson (Oxford, 1931), II, 68. All quotations from *Tam O'Shanter* in this paper are taken from the standard Centenary Ed., *The Poetry of Robert Burns*, edd. W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson (Edinburgh, 1896-97), I, 278-287.

aspects of Burns's technique: his brilliant handling of the narrative, the devices used to build suspense, the deft control of tone throughout, the richness and appropriateness of Burns's style. In this paper I propose to supplement Daiches' excellent analysis by concentrating on a single aspect of the poem—its style; and, more particularly, by focusing attention on what seems to me to be a most important element in the style—the element of parody. By thus limiting my study to a close examination of how this single element of parody operates in *Tam O'Shanter*, I hope to come a step nearer to the secret of the poem's subtle power and artistry.

Actually Burns employs several different styles in *Tam O'Shanter*, shifting boldly and rapidly from one to another to reflect the varying moods and comic purposes of the poem. Much of the fun of the poem, its richly humorous quality, lies, I am convinced, in these shifting styles of which the reader may be only vaguely aware. So smoothly and naturally are these changes effected (seeming to rise inevitably out of the narrative situations) that there is no disjointed effect; the reader's mind is left with a unified, powerful impression of the whole. He laughs at this or that passage without understanding just why he finds it amusing. And it is precisely here that parody plays a vital and pervasive role.

Burns's most obvious use of parody in *Tam O'Shanter* occurs toward the end of the poem when Tam, stirred by the lively dance of the witches, roars out his tremendous cheer for the "Cutty-sark." The instant he does this the lights go out; and Tam flees, spurring his horse to a gallop, while hotly pursued by the whole congregation of spirits: "And scarcely had he Maggie rallied, / When out the hellish legion sallied." At this exciting point in the tale, Burns deliberately delays the action by inserting a full verse paragraph of descriptive similes followed by several lines of whimsical commentary on the situation. In thus breaking the narrative at such a critical moment, Burns adroitly builds up suspense, as Daiches has noted. But the passage has another function, which is more to our purpose here. It reads as follows:

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,  
When plundering herds assail their byke;  
As open pussie's mortal foes,  
When, pop! she starts before their nose;  
As eager runs the market-crowd,  
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud:  
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
Wi' monie an eldritch skriech and hollo.



Now this is quite clearly and intentionally a parody of a rhetorical style associated with a kind of poetry very different indeed from *Tam O'Shanter*—namely, the heroic epic. The passage is, in fact, a mock-epic simile, or rather a cluster of similes patterned on the stereotyped structure of the Homeric simile. But Burns deviates from the classical form of the epic simile in one or two significant ways, as comparison with the following lines from Pope's version of *The Iliad* (X. 427-432) will show:

As when two skilful [sic] hounds the lev'ret wind,  
Or chase thro' woods obscure the trembling hind;  
Now lost, now seen, they intercept his way,  
And from the herd still turn the flying prey:  
So fast, and with such fears, the Trojan flew;  
So close, so constant, the bold Greeks pursue.<sup>3</sup>

From this typical example of the epic simile we see that it is normally a single, elaborately developed comparison (most often drawn from external nature) expressed in the conventional "as-so" formula. Burns, however, in the passage cited varies this pattern by using three short comparisons instead of one long one, still retaining the "as-so" construction but tripling the "as" part of it: "As bees bizz out . . . As open pussie's . . . As eager runs . . . So Maggie runs."

What effects does this device have on Burns's paragraph? For one thing, it grossly exaggerates the contrived quality of the construction. Whereas in Homer the artificiality of the "as-so" formula may not be too obtrusive, here it is deliberately forced upon the reader's attention by the tripling of the simile. He cannot fail to be struck by the "as-as-as-so" pattern. And if he is a cultured reader, he will inevitably be reminded (consciously or not) of heroic epic poetry. The end result, of course, is a delightful mock-heroic tone, the humor rising out of the absurdity of using this dignified and overly conventional rhetorical structure (which is associated in the reader's mind with the epic struggles of warrior heroes) to describe a drunken Scots farmer being chased by a crowd of witches. At the same time, Burns is probably making fun of the stereotyped epic simile itself, at least

<sup>3</sup> For evidence that Burns was thoroughly familiar with this kind of poetry long before he came to write *Tam O'Shanter*, and that he had, in fact, given careful study to both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in Pope's translation as well as to Dryden's rendering of *The Aeneid*, see his letters to Dr. John Moore, Aug. 2, 1787, and to Mrs. Dunlop, May 4, 1788, and Sept. 6, 1789 (in *Letters*, ed. Ferguson, I, 109, 221, 359).



as a device in modern poetry. And it should be noted, further, that Burns uses admirable restraint in not pushing the mock-heroic quality of this passage too far. The actual comparisons that he employs are homely and unheroic, drawn from local Ayrshire scenes within Tam's experience, and thus do not conflict with the folksy tone of the whole poem. The mock-heroic overtones come from the rhetorical structure alone. Thus we may conclude that this passage has more than one function in the poem. Not only does it delay the action to create suspense and, at the same time, give us a quite vivid picture of the actual scene; it also becomes amusing and distinctive in its own right through Burns's brilliant parody of the epic simile form.

In the instance just discussed we have seen Burns making masterly and clearly deliberate use of parody as a technique in *Tam O'Shanter*. In this passage the humor comes from his exaggerated imitation of a style which is normally associated with dignified, serious poetry; and this same method is one which Burns uses less obviously throughout the poem in several other passages to which we now turn.

For example, toward the end of the tavern scene in the early part of the poem, when Tam is becoming gloriously drunk with his cronies, totally unmindful of the lateness of the hour and the storm raging outside ("Tam did na mind the storm a whistle"), there is a significant stylistic change in the short climactic verse paragraph which closes this boisterous section of the poem:

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:  
Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

There is a distinctly literary tone in these expansive lines which contrasts with the colloquial idiom of the preceding passage. For one thing, Burns's use of the personified abstraction "Care" (a favorite device of serious neo-classical poetry) in this context is wholly ridiculous and delightful, and is enhanced by the offhand and highly indecorous way in which this usually dignified personage is disposed of—he drowns himself in Tam's liquor. The simile in the second couplet also smacks of conventional poetizing, and the final comparison of Tam with victorious "kings" further reinforces the mock-heroic tone of the whole paragraph. The reader has only to contrast these alcoholic generalities with the homey, intimate quality of the preceding passage

(as, for example, in the description of Souter Johnny: "Tam lo'ed him like a very brither; / They had been fou for weeks thegither") to become aware of the subtle shift in style which has taken place. Here again, in this paragraph culminating his tavern scene, Burns has strengthened the richly humorous effect by the skillful parody of devices normally associated with the kind of serious didactic poetry his age was addicted to.

Additionally, this parody of conventional elements in neo-classical English verse in the lines discussed above helps to prepare the reader for the succeeding transitional passage in which, after a long pause, Burns shifts completely into standard English:

But pleasures are like poppies spread;  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts for ever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.  
Nae man can tether time or tide;  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride.

These lines have been praised by some as being beautiful, and attacked by others as a blemish on the poem, an unhappy sliding into English poetic diction. But Daiches is surely right when he points out that here "Burns is seeking a form of expression which will set the sternness of objective fact against the warm, cosy, and self-deluding view of the half-intoxicated Tam, and he wants to do this with just a touch of irony" (page 286). Hence the deliberate shift into English poetic diction. And the touch of irony emerges, I submit, from the parodic element which Burns once again introduces. Those who see in this passage only a series of beautiful similes are surely missing part of Burns's intention and part of the wonderful artistry of *Tam O'Shanter*. It is true, of course, that each of these comparisons is poetically effective in itself; but more significant is the *accumulation* of similes. Burns is not satisfied with one or two; he piles them on, one after another, until we have four. Moreover, he encloses these similes within an extremely formal, even heavy-handed, rhetorical framework—"But pleasures are like . . . Or like . . . Or like . . . Or like. . . ." Thus, not only does Burns switch into English poetic diction in this passage, but he calls attention to it by adopting a stiff and artificial structure which

parodies grandiose poetics or "fine writing." The exaggeration is not in the content of the comparisons, but in the accumulation of them and in the rhetorical structure; and this is precisely the same method which Burns used in emphasizing the mock-epic similes, with their "as—as—as—so" formula, in the later passage which we have already analyzed.

We may now consider the total effect of these lines in a new perspective, as performing a multiple function in the poem. Not only is the passage pleasing in itself as a poetic rendering of a commonplace truth; not only is it effective as a transition, intentionally formal and detached in tone to bring us down to earth after Tam's "glorious" tavern elation, as Daiches has shown; but it is also brilliantly comic when seen in the light of the actual situation in the poem. The high-flown diction, the intentionally exaggerated formality of structure—reminiscent of grandiose eighteenth-century poems on serious philosophic subjects—are here used to describe the predicament of an obscure Scots tenant farmer, who has gotten drunk in a tavern and now has to get himself home! That the humorous incongruity of the passage was a conscious and important part of Burns's purpose here is made clear by his suddenly reverting to "plain braid Scots" after the four similes:

Nae man can tether time or tide;  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride.

This abrupt shift in style deliberately emphasizes the parodic quality of the grand poetic similes in a deft and humorous way.

In the three passages examined above we have seen Burns parodying dignified poetic styles for comic effects. There are, in addition, at least two or three other passages of *Tam O'Shanter* in which he employs a similar parodic method, but with the language and attitudes of the common people. The first of these occurs early in the poem:

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,  
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!  
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,  
A blethering, blustering, drunken bhellum;  
That frae November till October,  
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;  
That ilka melder wi' the miller,  
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;  
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;  
That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,  
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.

This is a fine re-creation of the age-old folk theme of the scolding wife. The remarkable effectiveness of these lines comes from the fact that Burns, while ostensibly only reporting these accusations, slides into the *actual style* of the scolding wife, so that the reader's imagination is stirred to visualize Kate furiously shaking her finger in Tam's face as she delivers her scathing criticism. This effect, incidentally, has been skillfully prepared for in the previous glimpse we have had of Kate sitting at home "Nursing her wrath to keep it warm." Each market night, the moment Tam opens the door the torrent of abuse begins. And the humorous exaggeration here comes largely from the cumulative effect of the accusations, which are hurled at Tam one after another in a long series of parallel clauses, with scarcely time to draw breath between them, and which rise to a climax of shocked indignation at the end with the perfect phrase "*even on Sunday*." Here, though Burns is not quoting Kate, he manages to incorporate in his style the angry tones of Kate's voice, and gives us in rich folk idiom a vivid parody of the perennial scolding wife.

Later in the poem, in two passages which may be considered together, Burns gives us a comic picture of folk superstition, using essentially the same technique. On Tam's wild ride home through the storm, he is "glow'ring round wi' prudent cares, / Lest bogles catch him unawares," becoming more and more apprehensive as he approaches the haunted Kirk-Alloway:

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;  
And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.<sup>4</sup>

And in the next verse paragraph, describing the ghastly scene within the Kirk itself, Burns lays on the horrors with an even heavier hand:

A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns;  
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;

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<sup>4</sup>For some of the details in this passage Burns was indebted to the long, superstitious speech of "Bauldy" in Allan Ramsay's pastoral play *The Gentle Shepherd* (Edinburgh, 1725), II.iii. 31-50. See *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, edd. Burns Martin and John W. Oliver, Scottish Text Soc., 3rd Ser. 20 (Edinburgh, 1953), II, 231.

A thief new-cuttet frae a rape—  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;  
Five tomahawks wi' bluid red-rusted;  
Five scymitars wi' murder crusted;  
A garter which a babe had strangled;  
A knife a father's throat had mangled—  
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—  
The grey-hairs yet stack to the heft;  
Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',  
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

In these two passages Burns is surely poking fun at Tam's superstitious fears, and also at the obsession of human kind in general with the sensational, grotesque, and unnatural; and he does so by describing these scenes in very much the same exaggerated way in which one might imagine Tam himself would later recount his frightful experience to Souter Johnny and the landlord over "reaming swats" of ale on the next market day. Here are all the earmarks of a tall tale told by a superstitious countryman who really had gotten a bad scare, and felt compelled to justify his fears. Hence the enlarged catalogue of horrors, the inclusion of minute details such as the grey hairs on the heft of the patricidal knife (a perfect touch to lend conviction), and the final intimation that Tam saw even more grisly sights which he does not dare to describe. All of this is precisely in character. No doubt Burns himself had heard scores of such tales at village gatherings, and he here parodies the style with great skill and turns it to good humorous account. Through this slightly exaggerated imitation of the way Tam himself would tell the story, Burns succeeds in conveying to the reader a shuddering sense of Tam's real superstitions terror, yet, at the same time, a feeling that the whole business is absurd, the figment of a befuddled imagination, not to be taken seriously. And this ingenious method enables Burns to put these horror passages over vividly to the reader without destroying the richly comic mood which pervades and unifies the entire poem.

Finally, in one or two other places in *Tam O'Shanter* Burns makes good-natured fun of the earnest didacticism which was characteristic of a good deal of eighteenth-century poetry, and which was especially congenial to Calvinist Scotland. The tendency to sprinkle poems with heavy-handed moral sermons was familiar indeed to Burns (witness his own *Cotter's Saturday Night*, for example); and he seized the opportunity to include a couple of tongue-in-cheek parodies of this moralizing style in *Tam O'Shanter*, his comic "tale o' truth." The first in-

stance of this device comes early in the poem in the short parenthetical passage beginning "Ah! gentle dames, it gars me greet," which has been aptly described by Daiches as "a somewhat beery generalization" (page 284). But a more obvious hit at the style of the moral poem appears at the very end of *Tam O'Shanter* when, the action having ended with Tam's hairbreadth escape from the fury of the witches, Burns introduces, with mock solemnity, his own "moral":

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man, and mother's son, take heed:  
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,  
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,  
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear:  
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

This absurd "moral" makes a perfect ending for *Tam O'Shanter*. Not only is it funny in itself as a parody of the sententious style in poetry ("take heed" . . . "Think!" . . . "Remember"), but it is even more amusing in the light of the poem as a whole. Burns is here, in fact, pretending that the entire uproarious story of Tam and Souter Johnny in the tavern, of the wild ride through the storm, of the macabre dance of the witches, of the "Cutty-sark," and of the final mad gallop to the Brig o' Doon was solely created to serve as a dire warning against drinking and chasing after girls—that the poem, in short, exists for the sake of the "delightful instruction" contained in the moral. The ridiculousness of Burns's mock-serious "moral" seen in this perspective is obvious enough. This final passage represents, perhaps, Burns's most daringly imaginative use of parody in *Tam O'Shanter*, and rounds off the poem beautifully with an anti-climactic laugh.

The eight passages examined here surely reveal parody as an important stylistic method in *Tam O'Shanter*, one which has generally been overlooked in critiques of the poem. In each of these passages a large part of the comic effect derives from the fact that the reader is reminded, perhaps only vaguely or even subconsciously, of the literary or colloquial style which Burns is imitating. Yet so smoothly does Burns slide out of one style and into another throughout the poem that the reader is seldom aware of the carefully calculated artistry which underlies these changes. Burn's use of parody in *Tam O'Shanter* is, indeed, a master stroke of concealed art. It accounts for many of the passages which readers find irresistibly amusing for no very obvious reason; and it contributes significantly to that richness of texture, that profoundly human and humorous quality which marks *Tam O'Shanter* as a truly great comic poem.

## *Contemporary Architecture in England*

The architect models the surface of the earth to house its inhabitants; to the topography of nature we add a complex of man-spun forms. This surface growth is the platform on which we live, moving inside and outside its vertical and horizontal components, working, meeting, being within our self-created habitat. Animals live in nature; we make our own. In our super-cities the earth lies forgotten beneath the paving and even the trees and fields become extended architectural forms domesticated into an architectural vocabulary. This total concealment of the living earth gives to our cities a quasi-organic existence. Our analogical minds see these building blocks as honorary organisms made by man (much as the Universe was created in the first six days) and then left to their own evolution. We forget that we made the cities. It is a human weakness that a *fait accompli* is almost irrevocable; the mere solidifying of an object is sufficient to suggest inviolability. An experiment is expendable, but something realised, completed, no matter how bad, takes on the protective quality of existence. Living in a man-made landscape, we forget that man is both responsible for, and master of, that which he has created. In Manhattan, we see the building blocks as monoliths rising from a pavement baseboard, rectangular prisms playing a visual game of form and space on an island platform; but walking through Karachi into the Sind desert, the sophisticated veneer of pavement and building ends abruptly where man has not yet taken over. This skin of civilization lies exposed along its edges and its thinness rests on the depth of the earth like a temporary airfield.

Of the world's less than a dozen architects with international reputations, only one is American born, but four have settled in the United States, and one has built there. Mendelsohn (now dead), Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Neutra are European emigrants; Aalto is a guest from Europe. Both Mendelsohn and Gropius lived and worked

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in England before settling in the States. Mendelsohn was in partnership with Serge Chermayeff, Gropius with Maxwell Fry, but their work was of less importance than their presence. The buildings of Mendelsohn did not satisfy the English temperament; the buildings of Gropius lacked the completeness of his earlier work on the Continent. The uncompromising modernity of his German buildings derived from the rational use of space and materials freed from the conventions of the 19th century. Gropius looked for the neatest solution. His strict rationalism sought an economy of means and avoided the potential richness of practicable structural forms when the traditional rectangle would suffice for his purpose. Architecture not being a scientific discipline, the economy of means easily slips into arid monotony. Gropius created at a level where the neutral shapes of our familiar world were revitalized by modern materials and techniques and an acute response to the new century. Refining each part down into an ordered whole, he gave his Fagus works and Werkbund exhibition buildings, built before the Great War, a logical unity that made their contemporaries look mongrel. The genius of Gropius was to raise "commonsense" into a synthesized aesthetic. His buildings in England do not have this formal inevitability and lack interest without it. Whereas with a Roman Moretti or Monaco you can delight in a façade and detest the interior, with Gropius it is all or nothing.

In England, it was not the Continental masters who guided modern architecture into maturity but the Russian-born Lubetkin. English architecture in the 1930's may be loosely compared to Canadian architecture in the fifties, when a few men of perception and integrity design within a style which is already part of an historical evolution abroad, but which is new and exciting compared with what exists. While news of the new architecture filtered through the magazines, these English pioneers built buildings of simple form and spatial freedom whose glass and concrete stood black and white amongst the vast greyness of unconcern. Lubetkin was a professional. Forming the centre of a group of young graduates, Lubetkin and the firm of Tecton proceeded to design with a fluency that sprang from a cosmopolitan assurance. The Continent in the 1920's underwent an architectural revolution. In this decade came the famous buildings—the Bauhaus by Gropius, the Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier, the Schocken Store by Mendelsohn, the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe. The revolutionary breathes the air of progress, gaining stimulation from the surge of events and contributing himself in the joy of discovery. The onlooker must work in isolation, feeling his way slowly through



Roehampton Estate  
Roehampton

Royal Festival Hall





Highpoint II  
Lubetkin and Tecton  
Hallfield School, Paddington  
Drake and Lasdun



a paralysing apathy into understanding. Fish in small ponds grow larger with difficulty, but in a vibrant society the momentum of progress pushes the prodigy into genius.

Lubetkin went to England at the beginning of his artistic growth. In 1927 he had designed with Ginsberg the Paris apartments on the Avenue de Versailles; in 1934, after a series of zoo structures in Regent's Park, Lubetkin and Tecton designed Highpoint I. This apartment block is built on high ground in one of the wealthier areas of London. Planned in the shape of a Cross of Lorraine and generally eight stories high, the main building block sits on stilts and lets the freely shaped public rooms meander from the street in front, back and down to the garden at the rear. The block hovers and shelters, and on the roof the railed parapet softens the silhouette against the sky and merges with the rounded superstructure. The concrete shell of the outside wall is holed for windows and modelled by the balconies, their cantilevered floors and moulded fronts folded down from the holes behind. Inside the building shell the squared partitioned planning is immaculate. Elegantly compartmentalized inside, rigorously formalized outside, Highpoint I is strait-jacketed in a convention which elevates the plan into a solid cube and looks out through holes in the walls. In its neighbour Highpoint II, built three years later, the façades become three-dimensional. Designed as a horizontal slab six stories high and four duplexes long, with ground-floor stilts and roof penthouse, the central half of the building block breaks through the building skin into a complex of concrete, brick and glass. As the ground-floor planting and canopy merges the driveway into the entrance hall, so the disintegration of the flat façade softens the meeting of interior and exterior space. Building in depth at the surface of the building block, white frames, piers and balconies pass through the blackness of glass and brick, joining inside and outside in the shadows of projections. Internally, while still neatly rectangular, the central part of the living room opens upwards between the bedroom walls and backwards into an elliptical staircase and landing. The solid geometry of Highpoint II stands between the holed walled box of the twenties and the panelled glazed box of the fifties. Its juxtaposition of articulated form encases space with a dominating solidity, firmly modelling an interior character, yet equally modulating the aura of its environment. Epitomised in the entrance below, Tecton's virtuosity brought the new architecture home from the Continent. The pilgrimage across the Channel was shortened to north-west London where the cantilevered free-shaped canopy still rests on the heads of Erechtheion caryatids.

The International Style, conceived by Continental architects, found exponents in such men as Connell, Ward and Lucas, and Maxwell Fry, but even by 1939, to find a modern building of any merit in the 117 square miles of the County of London was difficult. Today, while New York vaunts its few outstanding buildings, London's boroughs breathe the air of contemporary architecture: the apartment estates of Finsbury by Skinner, Bailey and Lubetkin, Hallfield in Paddington by Drake and Lasdun, Pimlico by Powell and Moya, Golden Lane by Powell, Bon and Chamberlin, the immense output of the London County Council under its previous architects Matthew and Martin. The catalytic years of the second world war swept the modern movement into reality.

In the young graduates and those who were still students, the war engendered a revolutionary enthusiasm for the evident logic of the new architecture. Immediately after the war building was limited and many architects chose to teach while waiting their opportunity to practice. As their influence became widespread, the schools turned "contemporary." The Festival of Britain in 1951 popularised the movement, and "contemporary" became the fashion. The gracious landscape of the South Bank exhibition grounds made up for the genteel modernism of most of its buildings, and nearby the newly opened Royal Festival Hall unequivocally lighted the Thames with its great glass walls. Strolling across the fountained piazza, sipping tea above the slowly moving barges, or blending music with the polyphony of form and space, the Englishman yielded to the idea of a modern architecture. In the past eight years the development of an English school of modern architecture has reached the point where it is difficult to recognize the architect from his work.

Neatly packaging their interiors in transparent skins, these "contemporary" buildings delicately portion off space from the surrounding world for the use of their occupants. The trees and sky or buses and people reflect themselves through the glass façades and soften the break between the inner cells and the outer world. As neutral containers, simple forms of rectangular prisms stand singly or in groups lightly joined by glazed connections. Separated from the solid earth and elegantly poised, "contemporary" architecture encloses space anonymously. Eating, banking, studying, shopping, and even buying gasoline, contemporary man moves through identical space differentiated only by detail and scale. The gridded façades gracefully crossed with horizontal and vertical lines rationally exploit structure and infill, carefully articulating the frame and the skin. Solid panels, freed from



their loads, float between frames; glazing lines etch the skin with subtle proportion. And occasionally, gentle slopes in roofs or ramps add sensation to the formal purity. Simple, spacious, tranquil, intellectually delightful in its formal consistency, visually charming with its coloured parts tastefully accentuating this inner logic, modern in materials and technique, "contemporary" architecture frees the environment from its overpowering edifices and leaves man predominant in an iridescent landscape.

The English architectural critics proclaim the renaissance of good taste, extol the group, and write articles in defence of the cliché or copy-book designing. They commend the high common denominator of design that produced the Hertfordshire schools and the London apartments, and overlook the other side. The best prewar architect, the individualist Lubetkin, has been gradually eased out of large-scale practice; his former younger partner, Denys Lasdun, remains virtually the only practicing architect of originality and growth. While the established "moderns" build their permutations of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, the even younger generation lace their Miesian austerity with *part brut* of Le Corbusier. Like the work of Parkin Associates in Canada or Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in the United States, English architecture is admirable and disheartening, lacks the inner vitality of creative development, and is derivative in content and monotonous in form.

Contemplation of one transparent cube may satisfy man's yearning for the Absolute. The contemplation of two transparent cubes, side by side, changes the character of the experience, as may be seen in New York where the once immaculate Lever House is blurred by the curtain walling of the building next door. The repeating façade of Georgian England, we are told, gave an even texture to the sidewalk landscape, but it is interesting to note that whereas in New York the occasional terrace brings emotional relief from the chaotic city silhouette, in London the repetition of terrace after terrace merely becomes boring. Not boring, it is argued, but negative, but in this thesis of negativity two points are overlooked. The first is that all buildings have character whether this be active or passive. Juxtaposed rectangular prisms, parallel walls, horizontal ceilings, barred glazed openings, a myriad of right angles; these are no more negative than any other spatial arrangement, leading finally to the claustrophobia of a caged existence. It simply takes longer to feel the effects. Secondly, it is not necessarily a good thing to have a passive environment. Perhaps this leads to inertia and ennui. The styles of Gropius and Mies

van der Rohe derive from the creativity of their architectural philosophies. From Alfeld to Harvard and from Tugendhat to Seagram, their buildings expose the development of their experience. To imitate these masters is possibly legitimate when this is done with sensitivity; to pretend that such imitation can ever replace the vibrant growth of new experience is to withdraw from the active world of good and bad into the sterile contemplation of a cosy formalism.

In answer to *l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* which omitted England from its survey of the world's young architects, the English *Architectural Design* devoted part of a 1958 issue to making good the deficiency. The results are unimpressive. Of the fourteen architectural firms represented, two produce bad architecture, nine are indifferent, three are interesting. Of these latter three, two are of interest merely because they have reacted to the anaemia of their colleagues. Stirred by the robustness of Marseilles and Ronchamp, the younger man feels the need for guts and clothes his academism in texture and asymmetry, not forgetting the now inevitable waterspout. The remaining architect represented in this issue epitomises the English scene. Creative in theory, original and capable in competition projects, Peter Smithson has produced two buildings. The first, a school at Hunstanton, is analogous to Saarinen's General Motors Center, a brilliant pastiche. The second building, a house, unlike the follow-through of the American, is essentially conventional gaining its difference from a superficial cleverness. Now in his mid-thirties, Smithson teaches in London.

To quote one English critic among many: "The suitability of the ordinary commercialised Miesian curtain wall grid as a universal backdrop comparable to the eighteenth century's repeating urban façade, has already been noted, and the prospect of such a plain, impersonal, workaday background silhouetting a foreground of special gems seems generally acceptable." But where are the special gems in England? A hyperbolic paraboloid for the Wilton carpet factory by one little known architect; a folded slab roof for a store in a small cathedral city by another little known architect. About the only real gem is Hallfield Primary School by Drake and Lasdun. The other first-rank English architects do not produce special gems but better boxes. Why then this passionate defence against a trend which, however significant in the outside world, is non-existent in English architecture?

Building, in England, is rightly considered a social art, the architect being responsible for the physical environment of society. The sum of the work of architects is virtually the city and while private ownership may initiate the city's growth, the finished forms and spaces of



the city's streets are public property. In this antithesis, the architect acts as the fulcrum transforming his client's requirements into an organic part of the city's fabric. But who is to say what is an organic development? The genius is unaverage; the average are too stupid. In democracy, the role of arbitrator rests on the intelligentsia.

The social structure in England with its sharp division between the more educated and the less educated has produced an intelligentsia committed to the underprivileged and acting as their philosopher-guides. The intellectual stands outside the frictions of class and acts as arbitrator, acting impartially, locating the truth and stating it forcefully. The first world war completed political equality; the comradeship and austerity of the second world war brought social and economic levelling. The maxim that "all men are born equal in opportunity" was shortened to "all men are equal." This assumption of equality extended to the mental and emotional faculties of man eased the intellectual of his moral burden. To make judgments and to act on them regardless of personal consequences is the ultimate price of human awareness. The intellectual of the fifties, seduced by the good life into an armchair judgment of events, rationalises his passivity with homilies on the welfare state; while those who remain active in the progress of life are designated "angry."

Gracious living, when provided for by others, tends to encourage spiritual compromise. That this is not inevitable is obvious where morality is based on the individual conscience. Nevertheless, in the welfare state of English Liberalism or the benevolent organisations of American capitalism, individualism has been supplanted by the group. The personal anguish of the intellectual in search of truth seems rather masochistic in a land of comparative wealth. Lounging under the sun-blue sky at his country cottage, or illicitly recording third-program music on his tape-recorder, the educated man is willing to concede that one man is as good as another, no man is perfect, and that working together for the common good is more fruitful than exploring one's consciousness for the essence of reality.

This democratic tolerance, still rejected by the artist, is personified in the architect. The artist acts as his own censor selecting his forms from his reaction to existence. The architect submits to the censor of good taste, submerging his creative perception to the cultured taste of the community. Democratic tolerance plus an educated class eliminates the genius and the charlatan and gradually raises the general level of achievement. To rationalise this cultured inbreeding, the critics invoke the theories of positivistic history, where history acts in the

pattern of natural science. With the great "styles" behind them in their history books, the "one culture, one style" school of thought points to "modern" as our answer to the problem which the post-Renaissance failed to solve. Much as the portrait painter is popularly regarded as an intuitive psychiatrist, the architect is conceived as the archaeologist's friend, raising symbols of the social ego. The architect as artist gives way to the architect as aesthete, replacing the artist's instinctive search for significant form by the aesthete's pleasure of playing with beauty.

Artistic creation has no static rules; with each new building the ideal changes as the architect changes, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes in a great surge of new creativity. Rules of architecture are part of the architect's inner logic and can only be tested within its formal consistency. The critic can formulate this rational foundation from the external evidence of the building; the architect, before creation, can only rely on his self-criticism as he searches for the means of expression, testing each form he visualises against the inner vibrations of his sensibility and rationality. Walter C. Behrendt, writing in 1937, criticized Le Corbusier for his deviationary tendencies from Internationalism into poetic individualism and this attitude is part of the generalizing of architecture away from art into the realm of design.

Furniture, fabrics, and light fittings are more akin to this generalized architecture than the expressive arts of painting and sculpture and are often judged by the same criteria of function and appearance. An example is the moulded plywood and steel-framed chair. This chair, with minor variations, has been designed in Italy, England, France, Germany, as well as in the United States. It is modern in materials and construction and has the machine aesthetic and spatial looseness which is fashionable today. The chair can hardly be said to be a good example of constructivist sculpture, but it may be argued that the difference between design and art is really a problem of semantics. The group architect considers himself a designer. In his vocabulary the artist-architect is the man of genius, original, stimulating, but not a sound architect. The Robie House is dark and damp; in the *Cité de Refuge* the matron gets stuck between column and wall; the client sued the architect of the Farnsworth House. Wright's forms are non-functional, Le Corbusier's planning is whimsical, Mies van der Rohe's construction is extravagant. Such genius is to some extent an embarrassment, for in the theories of the group architect, modern architecture, brought into being by the pulse of social life, would exist without these men. In the eyes of the group man, the artist-architect expresses

himself, but the designer-architect expresses society. When the architectural critic writes of "special gems" against a universal backdrop, he is deluding himself. The recurrent theme of "Georgian" in architectural criticism is symptomatic of a philosophy that precludes the individual in favour of the group.

For a number of years after the war, building in England was limited to housing, apartments, schools, and other communal buildings. Non-communal and luxury buildings were prohibited and even private houses were rigidly controlled. Much of the reconstruction of the bombed towns and the buildings of new areas was designed by the architectural staffs of local and central government. The consequent expansion of these governmental architectural departments has produced an environment favourable to group design. With any but the simplest buildings, designing is a group activity; it would simply take too long for one man to design everything even if he had the temperament to do so. The artist-architect imposes unity by the force of his vision; the designer-architect contributes to unity by conforming to accepted rules. In a bureaucratic department where men are interchangeable, where this year's assistant is next year's principal, the system of starting at the bottom and moving from peg-hole to peg-hole encourages conformity, and even in London the vast output of the County Council has a basic uniformity. Insight comes with personal revelation or through a group with intensely shared beliefs. While London may claim the latter, the evidence points to a less obscure source in Le Corbusier.

Not only are central and local governments directly responsible for many buildings, but, through their system of issuing work to private architects, they control by selection the style of many others. Public authorities and the committee tend to favour normalcy and, whilst they may select the reasonably good, seldom employ the unfamiliar. Individuality is only acceptable as idiosyncrasy for where the social style is sanctioned by authority, nonconformity is equivalent to anarchy. To further discourage the individualist, the post-war Town and Country Planning Act has given local government an aesthetic censorship. Supposedly to prevent the reoccurrence of pre-war ugliness, this section of the Act is often invoked by a lay committee against the unfamiliar or "ultra-modern." With due democratic logic, the civic committee pronounces judgment on the architect and the appeal inspector—an architect—pronounces judgment on the committee. Inevitably the architect wins his appeal and the design is approved but by this time the client has often disappeared—to a less dogmatic archi-

tect, to buy existing property, to emigrate to a less restrictive country. In the early 1930's, the Ruislip houses designed by Connell, Ward and Lucas provoked an aesthetic battle between convention and the modern style. In the 1950's, with "contemporary" an accepted style, the order of battle has changed.

A fashionable style generates its own momentum. Art is created by individuals and experienced by a small minority, a large majority of people being, at all times, insensitive to this manifestation of the human spirit. Of this small minority, some by temperament and training have insight into originality. The intelligentsia at large selects its idols from the explanations of this cultured élite. Connoisseurs may be eccentric (Ruskin's hatred of Whistler, Baudelaire's admiration for Constantin Guys), but the intelligentsia maintains equilibrium. Lacking the instability of excessive sensibility, the educated class takes over the art most conducive to its collective being and disapproves of the remainder. Thus wherever this stage of stylistic evolution has been reached, where people know what is right from appearance and not from feeling, where the style is codified and rationalised, where words are current to describe the known emotion, the pace of acceptance quickens into a snowballing progression. Competitions are judged by "contemporary" assessors; schools are run by "contemporary" staffs; "contemporary" offices require "contemporary" assistants. And conformity to a single style encourages the building industry to specialise. Modular dimensions, standard components, the skills of operatives, these derive from and perpetuate the accepted style of building. To build outside the style is not only anti-social but expensive.

Permitting an accepted style is obviously easier than creating one's own; success is far more likely with a limited objective than where the end is infinite. Within its limitations, English architecture succeeds in creating a modern environment of reasoned good taste but such a milieu, almost static in its aims, is antithetic to a changing society. The same influences that have raised the general level of design have also eliminated the extremes of good and bad. Contrasting the unpredictable anarchy of art with the predictable order of style, English theory sacrifices the genius to the highest common denominator. Style, however, is but the codification of creative thought. If English architecture has produced a national style, its main components are taken from abroad and each new change in its direction has been prompted by the work of foreign architects—to such an embarrassing extent that when the foreign vocabulary has no exact translation, the English have produced the traditional compromise: water tanks replace the sculpture

on the roof and the glass wall is paneled for the water-closet window. From Le Corbusier to Gropius to Mies van der Rohe back to Le Corbusier, the English have collected and classified the motifs of modern architecture, at the same time keeping such individuality at a suitable distance across the Channel and the Atlantic. Gropius, Mendelsohn, Breuer, Chermayeff left England for the United States. Lubetkin stayed in England and in the Festival of Britain, where English architecture celebrated its twenty years of existence, was not invited to be one of the architects. The revolution was over; the new academism prevails.

*Time in "Wuthering Heights"*

Commentary on *Wuthering Heights* has run the gamut from awed outcries to sober, methodical studies of its structure and themes to sentimental effusions about its out-of-this-world love affair. Yet none of these, I think, fully accounts for or justifies the absurd, posturing, teeth-gnashing, lip-curling, yet somehow sympathetic monster that is Heathcliff; nor has enough credit been given to Emily Brontë for her fascinating portrayal of a time-obsessed mind grappling with the past and present, and with the ecstasy and torture of a lost and apparently irrecoverable timeless realm. Still, at least four critics have implicitly acknowledged this time theme. Lord David Cecil, in *Early Victorian Novelists* (New York, 1935), sees the novel as a microcosm of universal forces in precarious balance—the forces of storm (the Earnshaws) and the forces of calm and peace (the Lintons); “the destruction and re-establishment of . . . harmony . . . is the theme of the story.” Mark Schorer, in “Fiction and the ‘Matrix of Analogy,’” *Kenyon Review*, XI (1949), a study of imagery in *Wuthering Heights* and other novels, finds that Brontë’s “metaphors signify . . . the impermanence of self and the permanence of something larger,” represented by the moors, the crags, the elements, the quiet earth covering the two sleepers at the end of the novel. Dorothy Van Ghent, in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, VII (1952), tracing Brontë’s use of window imagery, suggests a double pattern of movement: the attempt to get “outside” the limitations of civilized life and a “personal consciousness” as opposed to the contrary move “inside”; or the “outside,” constantly impinging on the personal consciousness inside, seen as a dark world of unknown, daemonic powers, while the “inside” is the lighted world of the known. And finally, B. H. Lehman, in an essay in *The Image of the Work* (Berkeley, 1955), argues that “the subject Emily Brontë finds in her material is no less than a vision of life renewing itself.”

All of these are, in great measure, true; but more important, each of these approaches is closely related to the others by virtue of the implicit temporal basis for such approaches (and perhaps indeed any approach) to this novel. Lord Cecil’s “calm” is clearly the orderly

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world of time while his "storm" is the world outside or, in the case of *Wuthering Heights* itself, almost outside time. Schorer's impermanent world of self is the world of temporal flux, chronological time, while his "something larger" is that infinite realm above and beyond time. So too with Dorothy Van Ghent's "outside" and "inside," her "human" and "other" worlds; and with Lehman's cyclic theory, which has no validity outside some time scheme and some concept of eternity.

I am not suggesting, then, that the novel must be read as a study of time, but rather that a more acute awareness of Emily Brontë's manipulation of time will lead to a more profound reading of the fascinating, often bizarre, clashes of character, image, and idea which are the substance of the novel.

It has often been said that *Heathcliff* is the story, that it succeeds or fails in proportion to the success or failure of his characterization. More precisely it is Heathcliff's motivation that is the story; and that motivation hinges upon the live Catherine Earnshaw for part of the book, and the dead Catherine Earnshaw (or the live Catherine Linton) for the rest—the present and the past. Thus the structure of the novel charts the growing pressure of the past (Heathcliff's memory of his childhood with Catherine) upon the present (Heathcliff's relationship to Catherine Linton, Edgar, Hindley), as well as the increasing presentness of the past in Heathcliff's mind (Cathy II, Hareton, Catherine's ghost). The double narration, then, cannot be studied outside this time scheme, for it is basically the necessary technical means of achieving such effects.

The novel begins in the present of 1801 and ends in the present of 1802, but almost the entire book is calculated to show that the latter has been permeated with past and even future time. In the beginning the reader does not know this, nor does Lockwood; we are plunged into the present together and we learn about it together—through Nelly Dean's narrative and through Isabella's letter, Zillah's reports, and other sub-narratives, each of which, while moving steadily forward in the horizontal line of historical time, probes back deeper into the past. Or rather, each narrator brings the past to bear more heavily, more dramatically, and more immediately upon the present. One might object here that the multiple narrator device is simply a way of explaining, to Lockwood and the reader, why Heathcliff, Cathy II, and Hareton are the way they are in the first chapters. This is of course true; but such a limited view cannot account for the cumulative impact of the past that registers upon Heathcliff (for whom there is no



explanatory "flashback") as well as upon the reader and Lockwood. The narrative structure, then, something like Sterne's or Virginia Woolf's or Joyce's, is meant to convey, without using stream of consciousness, a kind of all-pervading present, of which the past and future are integral parts, rather than an orderly progression in chronological time of separated, discontinuous events. After all, the history of the two families could have been related directly in the third person, as the motion picture almost had to be, by an omniscient author. It is only in other terms that Lockwood's dream of Catherine, for example, the real beginning of the temporal theme, can be seen as more than a gimmick forced upon the story for its intrinsically eerie effects.

The key images of the temporal theme, as of other themes in the novel, are the window and the mirror; both play central roles in establishing the psychological time locus for the chronologically temporal events. Brontë's first use of the window image is in Lockwood's dream, and the method she uses to move the reader and Lockwood into the past is a fine example of her going beyond a mere flashback. We move quickly in the first two and a half chapters from the present *Wuthering Heights* (which immediately has connotations of the past: "1500—Hareton Earnshaw") to Catherine's room (in which Heathcliff has "locked" the past) to the coachbed and Catherine's books, names, and diary jottings (where the ordinary flashback would have stopped) to Catherine herself outside the window. Without being fully aware of what has happened we have been swept into a whirlpool whose outer rim swirls precariously around the edge of the present, until we are sucked deeper through its confused mixture of past and present to the vortex of a living past, the flesh and blood Catherine. She in turn is a multiple symbol: the simple past (as a child with Heathcliff wandering the moors); the present (a ghost which becomes in the course of the novel increasingly more palpable to Heathcliff); and the agonizingly lonely "waif" aimlessly roaming in a realm beyond time, trying desperately to return through the window to recapture twenty lost years. Thus when Heathcliff, awakened by Lockwood's scream, enters the room and cries out the window he is seeking the Catherine who represents for him all three realms, and who at the end of the novel consummates the union of past, present, and future in the timelessness of death.

The figure of Catherine as past is evolved slowly and with great skill. When we first meet her (and Heathcliff) the moors obviously constitute a refuge from the routine and discipline of family social and

religious life—or, in other words, a haven free from "human" time and its relentlessness. Brontë presents the moors, then, as a distant vista, glimpsed from the inside of one of the houses; in a sense they are outside the ordinary chronological time of the family, the time for eating, going to church, and so on, the time that censors life. Thus after mutilating Joseph's books, *The Helmet of Salvation* and *The Broad Way to Destruction*, Catherine first retreats to her diary (the one Lockwood discovers) and then acquiesces to Heathcliff's "pleasant suggestion" that they "have a scamper on the moors." Another time Heathcliff spends Christmas morning on the moors while the family goes to church. And finally, Nelly recalls that "it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day." The punishment visited upon the two children for their denial (or stealing) of time is often deprivation of the regularly scheduled meal, or ironically banishment from the "family circle"; and after their stolen hours of freedom this "punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at . . . they forgot everything the minute they were together again. . . ."

One such excursion leads us to a crucial turning point in the temporal theme, and to the second major window image. Heathcliff and Catherine, banished from the living room, and attracted during their romp on the moors by the lights of Thrushcross Grange, peer into the windows to see how the Lintons live. Heathcliff's first reaction to the gorgeously colored and lighted room is: "We should have thought ourselves in heaven!" But then, repelled by Isabella's and Edgar's quarreling and simpering, he asserts his preference for his own world: "I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange." Dorothy Van Ghent interprets this scene as follows: "The windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the 'inside' from the 'outside,' the 'human' from the alien and terrible 'other.'" In other words she sees the window as a transparent wall between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the former alien and terrible, the latter human, warm, and normal. Clearly, however, the window separates the time-bound and convention-ruled world of the Lintons from the moors, the "real" world outside both cyclic and historical time, the only world in which Catherine and Heathcliff can be themselves, in which they are one. Thus, after Catherine is "captured" by the Lintons, Heathcliff resumes his "station as spy, because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended shattering their great glass panes to a million fragments, unless they let her out." The tragedy of their relationship is inherent

in Catherine's reluctance to "return": "She sat on the sofa quietly." This is Catherine's first betrayal, not only of Heathcliff but of her self. "I have only to do with the present," she tells Nelly later, not seeing for the moment that this present is "civilization," the world of time, in which the only acceptable idea of timelessness is "heaven," the mundane version of the "ideal present" of the moors and Heathcliff. This tragic error of Catherine's is further intensified by moments of illumination in which her time sense is not muddled by delusions of earthly grandeur. "If I were in heaven," she tells Nelly at one point, "I should be extremely miserable. . . . I dreamt, once, that I was there . . . heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. . . . I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven." But as Edgar Linton's wife Catherine more often compounds her self-betrayal by self-righteously adopting conventional Christian, temporal attitudes, as in her reaction to Heathcliff's "peaceful" return to live with Hindley at the Heights: "The event of this evening has reconciled me to God, and humanity! . . . should the meanest thing alive slap me on the cheek, I'd not only turn the other, but, I'd ask pardon for provoking it—and, as a proof, I'll go make my peace with Edgar instantly—Good-night—I'm an angel." In these terms Heathcliff's outcry after Nelly describes Catherine's gentle, quiet death is most significant: "Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not *there*—not in heaven—not perished—where?" For him the real Catherine still lives, outside.

The window scene at Thrushcross Grange, then, is pivotal for it marks a sharp change in Heathcliff's attitude toward Catherine and it establishes her symbolic temporal value in the rest of the novel. With her attraction, and ultimately her marriage, to the presentness of the Grange, Catherine's own character is split between what she was as a child, and what she is as Edgar's wife. Heathcliff, as the above quotation indicates, refuses to accept her new role and increasingly thinks of her as an embodiment of the past—the moors, childhood freedom and irresponsibility—a past whose timeless attraction is more powerful the longer Catherine lives as the mistress of Thrushcross Grange. The effect of this time-split upon Heathcliff is the shattering of his own personality. One part of him responds to Catherine's betrayal of her essential self by a comparable betrayal of his essential self; and this is additionally motivated by Heathcliff's memory of his punishment, degradation, and confinement by Hindley.

Thus Heathcliff is committed emotionally to the past, while intellectually, consciously, he builds his conventional future of money, property, heirs, etc. His revenge for his displacement *is* inhuman and monstrous, but the means to it are often the sub-rosa devices of the civilized, mannered, gentleman's world from which he has been excluded—arranged marriages, legal maneuvers, the acquiring of property, the manipulation of wills and inheritances. And so, by inflating and even distorting the past, he squanders the present in an orgy of intense moments, thereby ironically assuring that the future will echo, resemble, even repeat the past, despite his conscious wishes to the contrary.

But what of the other part of Heathcliff, that part of which the young Catherine is the soul? This other part of him responds to her betrayal by recognizing now only her pastness, what she was before the betrayal. The "ideal present" of the moors can be regained only in this way, finally only in the grave.

As for Catherine, her acute awareness of her temporal alienation is made abundantly clear after she becomes mistress of Thrushcross Grange. And her moving there brings into true perspective the temporal significance of the Heights itself. We have seen it already as the scene of Lockwood's dream, as the simple past of yesterday or a week or month ago, the past of the carved inscription over the door; but it is also time spent, irrecoverable time, in contradistinction to the moors which surround and impinge upon present and past moments and finally absorb them into its eternity. The Heights, then, is a kind of mean between extremes; and accordingly the final reconciliation of the two families is effected by a marriage and a legal repossession of the Earnshaw family property (the past) within the limits and conventions of the temporal present. One might say, indeed, that Catherine at Thrushcross Grange is time-oriented toward Wuthering Heights; or that Catherine Linton yearns toward the condition of Catherine Earnshaw; or, more conventionally, that Catherine Linton loves Edgar but Catherine Earnshaw *is* Heathcliff. Once again it is important to note that she herself realizes this, and in so doing relates herself directly to the temporal theme:

"There is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of creation, if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained,

and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it . . . as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff."

But Heathcliff is visible now only through the windows, outside, at Wuthering Heights (time past), or on the moors (the timeless "ideal present"). Because of her acceptance of the conventional present and future of the Grange, however, Catherine cannot actually see Wuthering Heights; she can return to it only in dreams or in hysteria (that is, when her fractured time sense is dramatically operative). Bedridden at the Grange, for example, she consciously craves the simple past of her old room and "that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice . . . it comes straight down the moor—do let me have one breath!" "I'm sure I should be myself," she says to Nelly, "were I once among the heather on those hills . . . Open the window again wide. Fasten it open! Quick, why don't you move?"

"Because I won't give you your death of cold," Nelly answers.

"You won't give me a chance of life, you mean," Catherine cries and, before Nelly can stop her, opens the window herself, "careless of the frosty air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife. . . . There was no moon, and everything beneath lay in misty darkness; not a light gleamed from any house, far or near; *all had been extinguished long ago; and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible* . . . still she asserted she caught their shining" (my italics).

With limited vision and time conception, Nelly recognizes only Catherine Linton; she cannot minister to Catherine Earnshaw. To Nelly the lights of Wuthering Heights are "never visible." For Catherine, on the other hand, present time has become obliterated and the past rushes in unobstructed by temporal consciousness: "Most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a child. . . . I was laid alone [in the panelled bed at the Heights]. . . . I lifted my hand to push the panels aside, it struck the tabletop [of her room at the Grange]! I swept it along the carpet, and then, memory burst in. . . ." As "an exile, and outcast . . . from what had been" her world she grovels in "the abyss" of time and space between her world and the Linton world. Into this dead duration, this intolerable void which temporal existence borders on every side, bursts Edgar Linton, the personification of such temporal existence; his first words in this scene

are admirably consistent with his world (and Nelly's and, later, Linton Heathcliff's) and with the window image pattern: "Catherine ill? . . . Shut the window, Ellen!" The contrapuntal image to this crucial scene, and also to the earlier one in which the two children look in the Grange window, is found when Heathcliff first returns after running away. Outside the Grange, anxious to see Catherine, he glances "up to the windows which reflected a score of glittering moons, but showed no lights from within." Since he is out of the past there is no conventional present for Heathcliff (only the one he creates by his revenge), just as for Catherine, *in* that conventional present, there are no visible lights at Wuthering Heights. The abyss for both is too wide and too deep to cross.

Catherine's death, then, is really anticlimactic, for she has died long before for Heathcliff. Only her pastness remains, and it is this which is conveyed most vividly by means of the other major image pattern, the mirror. Like the window image, it is developed most fully in terms of Catherine's shattered time sense, her divided self. The key scene occurs after she has locked herself in her room for three days because of a quarrel with Edgar about Heathcliff. On the third day Catherine happens to catch a glimpse of herself in the mirror and is aghast: "Is that Catherine Linton!" she exclaims, and demands that Nelly open the window to revive her Earnshaw self. When Nelly refuses, in delirium Catherine regresses again to childhood, dramatizing the temporal confusion of her mind in which the conscious wish to be in the past is often fused with unconscious presence in the past: "I see in you, Nelly . . . an aged woman. . . . This bed is the fairy cave under Peniston Crag, and you are gathering elf-bolts to hurt our [i.e. hers and Heathcliff's] heifers; pretending, while I am near, that they are only locks of wool. That's what you'll come to fifty years hence: I know you are not so now. I'm not wandering, you are mistaken, or else I should believe you really *were* that withered hag, and I should think I *was* under Peniston Crag, and I'm conscious it's night, and there are two candles on the table making the black press [of her room at the Heights] shine like jet." Again she sees her image in the mirror, Catherine Earnshaw looking at Catherine Linton. Nelly, "incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own" image, covers the mirror with a shawl. "It's behind there still!" Catherine persists. "And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone." Nelly, of course, cannot understand, and tries vainly to pacify the present Catherine: "There's nobody here. . . . It was *yourself*, Mrs. Linton." Again, when the shawl falls and Catherine shrieks in



terror, Nelly once more says the conventional thing: "Wake up! That is the glass—the mirror, Mrs. Linton; and you see yourself in it, and there am I too by your side." Catherine's refusal to recognize herself thus reasserts the distinction between her pastness and presentness, her essential self and her false image. In similar fashion, but with an interesting reversal, Nelly earlier forces Heathcliff to look at his slovenly unkempt figure in the mirror and convinces him to clean up and dress neatly to parallel Catherine's newly acquired Linton manner. Here, of course, Heathcliff *does* recognize himself and momentarily is swayed from his essential self toward the manners, customs, and appearance of the conventional present.

Admittedly such a use of the mirrored image is hardly remarkable, but when the image is translated into eyes which reflect, in the present, a past image, Brontë succeeds in integrating her whole conception of time in the novel, and centers its impact upon Lockwood, the reader, and most particularly upon Heathcliff. For all the eye reflections are of Catherine.

These reflections are to be carefully distinguished from mere resemblance, which has nothing to do with time but rather with personalities and with Heathcliff's vengeful attempt to create a life for himself in the conventional present. Thus he persecutes Hareton for his resemblance to Hindley, Cathy II for her resemblance to Edgar, Linton for his resemblance to Isabella. Heathcliff as persecutor is precisely parallel to Catherine as a Linton, both having ultimately betrayed their essential natures. When his self-betrayal has reached its climax the essential Heathcliff reasserts itself, not in terms of Catherine's temporal aberrations, but rather in terms of the present mirroring the past. Of Hareton, Heathcliff says, "But when I look for his father in his face, I find *her* every day more! How the devil is he so like? I can hardly bear to see him." In a rage at Cathy II, he "gazed intently in her face . . . drew his hand over her eyes, stood a moment to collect himself apparently, and [turned] . . . anew to Catherine [Cathy II]." Nelly points out to Lockwood that Hareton's and Cathy II's eyes "are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw." Finally the cumulative past impinges so persistently on the present that it assumes the proportions of a Joycean nightmare for Heathcliff: "I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men, and women—my own features mock me. . . ." In such a state time, in effect,



has ceased to exist; the present is the past and the past present. Psychologically Heathcliff has ceased to exist (as Catherine did during her fits of illness) for the past can only motivate action as long as it *is* past. And now Catherine is present, has indeed come inside the same window at which Lockwood barred her entrance earlier. Consequently Heathcliff confesses, "I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring . . . it is by compulsion, that I do the slightest act, not prompted by one thought, and by compulsion, that I notice anything alive, or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea." This idea is, of course, Catherine, death, the past, oneness, the moors, timelessness, eternity, "my heaven" as Heathcliff later calls it ("that of others is altogether unvalued, and uncoveted"). "My whole being, and faculties are yearning to attain it. . . . I'm convinced it *will* be reached—and *soon*—because it has devoured my existence—I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfillment." His identity, in time, is gone; and the future, with Catherine, is temporally a total reversion to the past and a concomitant rejection of the present in which that past has been renewed but also remolded, by Hareton and Cathy II. They can exist in the present simply because they are able to translate the past comfortably into present terms. Neither Catherine nor Heathcliff could survive such a compromise. Thus even by dying they defy time and convention, for both die in the season of renewed life on earth; Hareton and Cathy II, on the other hand, suitably begin the conventional calendar year together by being married on New Year's Day and by bringing up to date the inscription over the door. "1500—Hareton Earnshaw" is now "1802—Hareton Earnshaw." And the fact that Catherine and Heathcliff have transcended this concept of time is underscored by the two final uses of the window image: (1) Heathcliff, dead, lying in the immediate past of the coachbed (in which the temporal theme began) beside the open window that looks out onto the moors; (2) Joseph's insistence that, after Heathcliff's death, "he has seen two on 'em looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night, since his death."

The end of the novel, then, is the climax of Heathcliff's peculiarly complex response to time. He denies the past as past and powerfully affirms its presentness. And the Heathcliff that is created out of rage and revenge learns, as Proust has shown us, that it is impossible to recapture a "pure" past because its purity has been flawed by the worlds of experience between the event and its recall, and because the past itself suffers change in the very act of passing through the laby-

rinthine ways of the human mind. But the essential Heathcliff, and Catherine, are consistently motivated by the familiar constant wish for some kind of timeless experience, the urge to triumph over mutability, to experience the ecstasy of being unified with something eternal. If Heathcliff's revenge fails, through his distorting of the past and consequent squandering of the present, his triumph with Catherine is inherent in his quiet sleep on the timeless moors, his recovery of himself and of a sense of continuity with, and belongingness to, something that seemed forever lost.

## *Graham Greene: Catholicism in Fiction*

Inevitably, in dealing with the work of a Catholic novelist, the critic, whether he likes it or not, is compelled to touch upon the theological issue, for the simple reason that it plays as a rule so prominent a role in the work of the author he is discussing. Perhaps in the end the critic's labor of analysis serves a salutary purpose in that it throws some light on the vexed problem of the relationship that obtains, or should obtain, between the novel and the religious outlook. Today this problem is viewed of necessity from a radically changed perspective. Harvey Eagleson, writing on "The Beginning of Modern Literature," declares: "God died on November 24th, 1859, and every day since, the mound of earth above His grave has been piled higher." In short, after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, the attitude of the writer toward the supernatural was transformed; he lost his old instinctive sureness of faith in the absolute. Henceforth man could no longer be regarded as a special creation, made in the image of God, but as a part of nature, red in tooth and claw, subject to the reign of unalterable law. However, despite the subsidence of faith in Christianity, the Christian outlook is still a dynamic part of Western civilization.

Yet how can the modern writer, even if he is a believer, subscribe to Christianity on the old terms? Can he believe without falling into heresy? Can the creative imagination accommodate itself to the orthodoxies of the Christian faith? Independent, and therefore heretical, in its vision of life, the creative mind abhors dogma. If the writer is to derive any nourishment from the Christian mythos, he can find it only in the endless struggle with sin and the temptation to challenge orthodox religious doctrine. That is, in effect, the solution Graham Greene seems to have accepted. In his contribution to the book *Why Do I Write?* he declares that the practicing novelist, whatever his credal

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commitment, identifies himself with all mankind, the guilty as well as the innocent, though Greene is by temperament drawn more closely to the portrayal of sufferers in sin. But no one, and that is the point he stresses in his aesthetics of fiction, should be shut out from the all-embracing compassion of the novelist. If this plunges the novelist in the mire of heresy, that is unavoidable. It is his function, nay, his duty, to be disloyal. This is the paradoxical but courageous faith, born of despair, which animates Greene's world of fiction.

If character is destiny, then Greene's somber view of the world and of the nature of man has been shaped decisively by his temperament. The fact that as a Catholic he holds a number of religious and moral values tells us little about the specific content and quality of his work. Consider such "Catholic" writers as James Joyce, Sean O'Faolain, Francois Mauriac, and Graham Greene. These men have nothing but their religion in common, and in reality not even that, for they interpret it and react to it in strikingly different ways. If James Joyce is the blasphemer, Graham Greene is one of the neo-Pascalians of our time. In the imaginative world that Greene projects, man is helpless to save himself. Grace comes to him, if it comes at all, gratuitously and capriciously. Man is no longer free to choose. His will is bound. Weakness is the fate of man—weakness and defeat. And this is so—the failure is foredoomed—because man is impotent to help himself; he must beseech the aid of God. No one can escape the universal net of sin. To live is to fall, to be human is to be sinful. Such a "theology," as Sean O'Faolain points out, ends in the liquidation of the autonomous hero, the one who can master his destiny.

Graham Greene adopts a consistently pessimistic and tragic view of life. In *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, he makes clear his conviction that failure attends all our projects and that in the end, in this world, we suffer shipwreck. This brooding pessimistic outlook is not only native to his temperament but also fits in logically with his belief in the reality of hell and damnation as well as the reality of evil. And that is his primary source of interest as a novelist, this pervasive sense of evil and its effect on the human heart. He is literally obsessed (he is convinced that every writer suffers from his own type of obsession) by the theme of betrayal: Judas betraying Christ is the paradigm of every betrayal enacted on earth. Greene knows, too, that every act commits us ineluctably; we choose our own death and are responsible for our own life.

These themes of choice, of commitment, of betrayal, enter intimately into the fabric of his fiction, for they are integral parts of his vision

of human reality. All his life long, as he tells us, he has been fascinated by the problem of evil, which is an impenetrable mystery. Thus early did Greene discover his major themes: the universality of evil, the seed of failure that is implanted in the heart of success, the sense of doom that rules this earth and the miserable creatures crawling on its surface. From the perspective of the art of fiction, of course, the important thing is not that he is obsessed by these themes but what he does with them, how he embodies them dramatically in his work. He leaves us in no doubt where his sympathies lie. Disregarding the imperatives of orthodoxy, he introduces us to "heroes" who are sinners and failures. From the start, once he decided to become a writer, he worked out the pattern which would shape the religious motif in his fiction: "perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done."

Indeed, it is largely in terms of his religious obsessions that he not only interprets character and destiny but also evaluates literature. In his essay on "The Lesson of the Master," Greene makes this revealing statement about Henry James: "The novel by its nature is dramatic, but it need not be melodramatic, and James's problem was to admit violence without becoming violent." Here Greene raises an interesting and complex problem that has considerable bearing on his own fiction, which does at times become violent. Yet how, Greene asks, can that be helped? Once the writer lost the religious sense and the human being ceased to occupy a position of central importance, the novel turned subjective, exploring the world of sensations, introspections, dreams, memory, fantasy, but the vanished feeling of human importance could not be recovered by this shift of focus. Distrusting the "pure" novel, Greene composes fiction that concerns itself with the solid, sensuous world, but he also pictures the arena of struggle between good and evil, the efforts of the soul to save itself from damnation. And in heightening the religious conflict generated by perfect evil walking the earth, Greene admits violence without, in his serious novels, descending to the use of melodrama.

Greene divides his works of fiction into those novels that are to be taken seriously as works of art and those that are designed for "entertainment." It is purely a classification of convenience. We may safely take it for granted that, as Henry James well knew, the creative writer betrays his hand in everything he produces, even for purposes of entertainment. In *The Man Within*, which is a rousing melodramatic thriller filled with the stock ingredients of pursuit and revenge, Greene

somehow manages to introduce the element of "mystery," the religious quest, the contrast between the believer and the non-believer. *Brighton Rock*, originally published as an "entertainment," was later included in the canon of his serious work, and rightly so, but it again brings up the problem whether a writer like Greene, even in his calculated fictional entertainments, can entirely keep out his peculiar obsessions, his characteristic vision of the world. It is doubtful if he can.

In *Brighton Rock*, out of such melodramatic material as the feuds of gangsterdom, with its planned murders and its killings for revenge, Greene weaves a story that far transcends the plane of melodrama. The two principal characters, the Boy who is the leader of a gang, and the girl Rose who becomes involved in the action, are Catholics. Both believe in sin and hell and damnation, but only Rose hopes for the redemption of grace. It is the Boy, scarred for life by the wounds of poverty, who is filled with dim religious longings, an overwhelming sense of loneliness, a foreboding of what Life in its inscrutable malice might do to him. When he confides to Rose that he does not go to mass, she asks him imploringly whether he believes.

"Of course it's true," the Boy said. "What else could there be?" he went scornfully on. "Why," he said, "it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation," he said with his eyes on the dark shifting water and the lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace Pier, "torments."

"And Heaven too," Rose said with anxiety, while the rain fell interminably on.

"Oh, maybe," the Boy said, "maybe."

Now this brief scene, played out against the backdrop of the sea, the lightning, and the driving rain, illustrates not only the ambiguities with which Greene freights his dialogue but also the manner in which he incorporates his religious insights into the body of fiction. The Boy, knowing himself to be a wicked, unregenerate sinner, feels that Hell is certain, but there is no guarantee of Heaven. Greene leaves us in no doubt on that score. Hell lay about this youngster in his infancy, Greene declares, and that is why he believes in flames and damnation and torments.

The tragedy in *Brighton Rock* draws to its appointed close: the Boy must die, but he is convinced, even as he is about to take the leap into eternity, that peace is not for him. "Heaven was a word; Hell

was something he could trust." Rose, with her unswerving loyalty, would rather be damned with the Boy than be saved—alone. All that deterred her from taking the final step and committing suicide was the fear that they might miss each other in the land of death, one being granted mercy which the other was denied. But this is the veritable sign of her grace: in refusing to be saved without the Boy she reveals her saintliness. The old priest to whom she goes for confession assures her that no soul is cut off from mercy. Then he tells her the message that is the theme of the novel: A Catholic, he says, "is more capable of evil than anyone. I think perhaps—because we believe in him—we are more in touch with the devil than other people." Though Greene is an expert craftsman in motivating the course of the action, the theological preoccupations of the protagonists are not effectively integrated within the body of the story proper. Yet, regardless of what these characters may feel about heaven and hell, the spirit of sacrifice that Rose exhibits seems to indicate that saintliness consists, after all, in human fidelity. Whatever may happen beyond the grave, on this side we must keep faith and, however sinful our life may be, love is the only freely offered means, available to all, of saving us.

In *The Power and the Glory* (first published as *The Labyrinthine Ways*), Greene shows what he can do in composing a fascinating novel of suspense about a Catholic priest who struggles against temptation and who is destined to suffer martyrdom. Held throughout by the compelling power of the narrative, the reader not only beholds how the essence of the faith, despite all the vicissitudes of persecution, is vindicated but also gains insight into the contradictory nature of the believer who, besieged by the secular hosts of evil, is forced to deny his God. Yet Greene, in this novel, is not guilty of the charge of composing religious propaganda. *The Power and the Glory* performs its ministry as an imaginative work of art.

It is not enough to say of Greene's principal characters that they are Catholics; they are religious with a defiant and often disconcerting difference. Though they remain true to the religious spirit, they are in many respects wretched heretics, grievous offenders against the express commandments of the Church. In *The Power and the Glory*, the priest who carries out in secret the sacred duties enjoined upon him by God and the Church, though all religious observances are strictly forbidden in this province of Mexico, is far from being an admirable character. A whisky priest who gets drunk at times, he has been guilty of fornication and has begotten an illegitimate daughter, but he is miserably aware of his transgressions and serves God as



faithfully as he can in the face of cruel persecution, knowing what the penalty will be if he is caught and quietly accepting this fate.

What adds density and the dramatic force of complexity to Greene's story is his steadfast awareness of the power of evil at work in the world and in the soul of man. The faith is dialectically affirmed through a series of heresies and denials, trials and temptations. Uncompromisingly honest in his portrayal of life, Greene knows the worst that can be said about human beings, yet he still regards them as made in the image of God. They commit abominations, their sins rise up like a foul stench in the nostrils of God, they are vile and despicable creatures, but they are also the children of the Lord and even in their drunkenness and fornication and betrayal they bear witness to the miracle of God's grace.

Greene writes with extraordinary sensory vividness. With a few deft visual strokes he etches a scene, builds up the atmosphere of a place, suggests the heat and indolence and poverty of this Mexican region with its rank vegetation, its shabby buzzards, its swarming beetles. The enemy of the poor hunted priest who must flee in disguise is a Mexican lieutenant who is devoted fanatically to a secular religion of his own: the extirpation of ignorance among his people, the fight against the curse of poverty, the enlightenment of the masses. He has a deep horror of the Christian myth and mysteries, the sacrifices the Church demands of the credulous, benighted natives, the peasants kneeling before holy images, mortifying their flesh, hoodwinked by these lying promises of eternal bliss in the afterlife. Greene sees in him something of the priest.

It infuriated him to think that there were still people in the state who believed in a loving and merciful God. There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy—a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all. He knew.

There at last we are given a dramatic projection of fundamental values in conflict. Greene obviously does not agree with this lieutenant and his dream of socialism but he understands the motives that drive him and he respects these motives even if he cannot share them. What makes Greene so singularly effective as a religious novelist is that he does not write *religious* novels; he writes novels that deal illuminatingly with an essential aspect of life that we call religious. He knows the

heart and hope of the unbeliever as well as the vital intuitions that support the devout Catholic, and he knows, too, the devils of doubt that at times sorely afflict the believer. This fanatic of a lieutenant coolly formulates the logic of the situation: if heaven was real, then no torments of the flesh should have prevented the Catholic priests in Mexico from becoming martyrs of the faith. What is the crusading ideal in behalf of which the lieutenant is prepared to massacre the clergy? He would remove all vestiges of superstition from the mind of the younger generation and fill them with the saving light of truth, the knowledge of "a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose."

In his flight, the priest, though aware of his inadequacies, keeps on doing what has to be done. Why had God chosen him, an unworthy vessel, to put God into the mouths of men? To the very last he retains the sense of the wonder of life, a feeling of reverence for the unique privilege of being alive. He has the opportunity to escape from the trap and begin life all over again in blessed freedom, but if he left these people then God would cease to exist for them. Unlike the lieutenant, he knows how limited man is, how restricted in his repertory of vices. Was it not for such people that Christ had died? For what is God? How picture Him to the intelligence of simple folk? No matter what explanation he might give his parishioners, he himself felt at the heart of his faith the presence of this mystery—that man was made in the image of God. "God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in the prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex." Hence the need not only for infinite understanding but also infinite compassion.

The most moving scene in the novel takes place in a crowded cell, in which all types of men—the criminal, the young and the old, the pious and the bestial—are thrown together. Feeling a tremendous love for these inmates of the prison, even the worst of them, the priest discloses his identity. Even in this desperate situation, he maintains the integrity of his faith and resolves to do God's bidding. Everything that lives is holy, and understanding drives out hatred. And the prisoners do not betray him. When he is finally caught, he realizes that death ends all, but he knows too that his trespasses matter but little; he is an instrument of God, who remains a mystery.

Graham Greene's work illustrates the fact that there is no such thing as a "religious" (or for that matter a "political") novel. The

subject matter of fiction does not matter in the least. What counts is what the novelist does with it. Proust is a "political" novelist, though he does not concern himself overtly with politics. D. H. Lawrence, for example, is one of our truly religious novelists, even though he does not deal with religion in the orthodox sense of the term. Fiction inevitably portrays the existential conflicts of human beings, the crises of destiny they must face, the struggles they pass through and the suffering they endure, the image of perfection they pursue. If the novelist happens to be a Catholic, that will naturally color his interpretation of character and his vision of life, but the religious atmosphere that pervades his work is only that—atmosphere and background. The religious synthesis cannot dictate the outcome except in one respect: if the leading characters are Catholics, we thereby gain some insight into their *probable* reactions in various crucial situations, though even there the resolution of the central conflict must remain in doubt to the very end. That is to say, if the novel is to retain its underlying dramatic power, if it is to give a faithful and dynamic portrait of the dilemmas of the human situation, it must focus attention on the contradictions of human nature, its irrational impulses, the effort of people to live up to their faith, their difficulties in carrying out the commandments of God. Otherwise the novel turns into a religious tract in which the dogma is theologically sound but artistically useless.

If the novelist chooses—he is free to write about the kind of life he knows best—to analyze the conflicts of Catholics, then in one sense his fictional pattern has already been chosen for him. The characters in his novels must be punished—they must punish themselves—for their transgressions. Hence the Catholic novel (if such a term is permissible) presents basically a drama of sin and redemption, a plot that revolves around the twin poles of guilt and atonement. Such is the perversity of human nature, however, that readers of fiction are generally more interested in the commission of sin than in the process of redemption. Hence the novelist must build up the structure of sin in such an imaginatively convincing manner that we can identify ourselves with the suffering sinner even as we anticipate the price he must pay for his enormities, the accounting he must give for his transgressions before his conscience and before God.

This narrative action must not be too schematized if the novel is not to sacrifice psychological complexity in the interests of orthodoxy. Human beings, especially men and women in love, cannot be fitted into the Procrustean frame of dogma. Graham Greene, a gifted novelist and conscientious artist, highlights these perversities of the human soul.

For him, as we have seen, it is the sinner who best exemplifies the cardinal Christian virtues and comes closest to being a saint. In *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene describes with extraordinary insight the diabolical rationalizations of which the mind is capable and the despair that often overtakes human relationships. The action takes place in a forsaken spot of West Africa where the English officials, leading dreary and monotonous lives, are sick of their work with Negroes. Brilliantly Greene paints the background, the vultures, the dirt, the heat, the gossip that spreads with insidious swiftness, the meanness and moral rottenness of the community. Scobie, the hero of this tale, who has been in this region for fifteen years, is a man of scrupulous integrity, incapable of lying to himself.

In the course of his duties as a deputy commissioner, he has discovered that guilt and innocence are relative, not absolute. Scobie has gone beyond the relief of tears, beyond the reach of illusion, beyond tragedy. Sternly he lives with his own exacting conscience, bearing his lot with stoical fortitude. All he craves is the blessing of peace, but that is not to be bought. He has disciplined himself not to let emotion get the better of him, for in this climate it is dangerous to yield to love or hate. Greene balances the portrait by showing that even though men may sink to the level of beasts, perjure themselves, accept bribes, yield to corruption, some refuse to sell their souls, and Scobie is such a man, prepared in advance to accept the consequences of his wrong actions, knowing he will have to pay in full for his defiance of God's mandate against self-slaughter. He is the sinner of whom saints are made.

It is for the sake of his wife, whom he no longer loves but for whom he feels boundless pity, that he finally strikes a bargain which proves his undoing. The seed of corruption enters into him. He entertains no illusions about life, which is much too long, an eternity of torment. Though bottled up within himself, disinclined to reveal his most intimate feelings, he cannot endure to live in deception and darkness when the truth glared at him unmistakably; but unfortunately the truth is more than human beings can bear; more important than truth is the act of kindness implicit in the lie. Out of pity for his poor wife, Scobie is prepared to traffic with evil. He realizes that the despair he carries within him is the unforgivable sin, but it is one which the evil man never practices. "Only the man of good will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation."

The conflict in the novel comes to a head after Scobie's wife leaves and Scobie falls in love with Helen. As a Catholic he tries to pray

but it is only a formality, for he does not consider that his life is sufficiently important for him to importune God with his prayers. Greene makes the religious element psychologically and dramatically convincing by indicating that there were times when Scobie found it difficult to explain the mystery of God's action, to reconcile the seeming cruelties of God with His divine love. There were no happy people in this world—a constantly recurring theme in Greene's fiction. It was absurd to expect happiness as one's portion in life. What then was the truth? Scobie wonders: "If one knew . . . the facts, would he have to feel pity even for the planets? if one reached what they call the heart of the matter?" That is indeed the heart of the matter, the question of questions, the enigma that can plague the mind of a naturalist like Thomas Hardy as well as a Catholic novelist like Greene. All Scobie is certain of is this: the inevitability of suffering. He has tried to love God, but "I'm not sure that I even believe." The priest to whom he confesses this is not at all put out. But the absolution affords Scobie no sense of relief. God seemed somehow too accessible.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the woman he loves unlawfully does not believe in God. When the affair reaches its culmination, he recklessly sends her the note of love which compromises him—the note in which he blasphemously declares that he loves her more than he loves God. By this one act he has abandoned God. Now, though he still yearns hungrily for peace, he finds he cannot pray. His wife is on her way back and he must choose. Believing as he does in the reality of everlasting damnation, in hell as "a permanent sense of loss," he chooses. Logical in her reasoning, the woman he loves forces him to face the contradictions in his behavior: if he believes in hell, why does he continue this illicit relationship? What is his answer? Despite the categorical teaching of the Church, he feels that love does deserve some show of mercy. One pays for the sin love, but not for all eternity. Nevertheless, he is aware that human love is transient, destined to lapse into indifference or death.

There is the conflict he must face: should he confess and save himself and consign his beloved one to her fate? He refuses either to fool himself or to cheat God. Incapable of promising the priest that he will not return to this woman, he denies himself forever the blessing of peace, and as a responsible man he accepts his doom. He has worked out a way of dying that no one will ever suspect. Everything has failed him—love, work, trust. Perhaps "even God is a failure." Now that he had made up his mind to die, what was the good

of praying? As a Catholic he realizes that no prayer is effective when one is in a state of mortal sin. He cannot even trust God, the God who made him, for it was this same God who had saddled him with responsibility, and he is not one to shift the burden of blame. Justice must be done. "We are all of us resigned to death: it's life we aren't resigned to." And so, convinced that by ending his life he would also spare God further pain, he commits suicide.

In Greene's case, the spiritual struggle counts most, the fight against evil, the search for absolute peace, the quest, never certain and never completed, for union with God. In *The End of the Affair*, structurally his weakest "religious" novel, Greene achieves intensity and complexity by having as a protagonist a novelist, a man who is sensitive and trained to observe his own emotions as well as those of others. The story opens when his affair with a married woman, Sarah, has ended. Immediately we are alerted to the nature of the theme: man's need to believe in a God who contradicts all principles of logic and all the premises of empirical inquiry. Since the novel begins with the end of the affair, the novelist in the story is compelled to go back in time, to bring back to life the aching and precious memories of the past.

He remembers the bomb which pinned him beneath a door. Sarah thinks him dead and begs God for a miracle to bring him back to life. Later we learn from Sarah's diary what her motives were for leaving her lover and what caused her to become religious. At first she does not believe in God and is not even aware that there are arguments to prove His existence. Thus, when the man she loves is, as she thinks, lying dead, she kneels on the floor and prays. But why? If there is no afterlife, then what is the use of such petitions to God? As she kneels, she wishes she could believe, wishes God would *make* her believe. At this moment she makes a kind of compact with God that if her lover is restored to life, she will believe and will give him up forever.

Greene introduces the character of a fanatical rationalist whose sole "religion" in life is to strip people of their religious illusions, but all he succeeds in doing is to drive Sarah more securely into the arms of the Church. But even there she encounters complications. The Catholic Church promises the resurrection of the body, whereas her consuming aim is to escape the bondage of the flesh. The last letter Sarah wrote her lover reveals the conflict in her nature. Like most people she wanted both eternity and the specious, glittering present, both God and human love. When the Catholic priest will not permit



her to annul her marriage so that she can marry her lover, she revolts at first against such intolerance. God should be more understanding and more merciful because He is all-seeing, and yet His mercy sometimes seemed like punishment. In spite of everything, however, she is prepared to believe, to accept every miracle as authentic in the face of all the scientific evidence that miracles are impossible. She writes: "I've caught belief like a disease. I've fallen into belief like I fell into love." And her lover, the novelist, now that Sarah is dead, broods curiously about the beginning and end of things, and reflects: "When we get to the end of human beings we have to delude ourselves into a belief in God. . . ."

Though *The Quiet American* is not a religious novel in the formal sense, the pattern of preoccupation remains substantially the same: the author is concerned fundamentally with the loneliness of the human situation, the inevitability of death, the paradox of human love. If there is any lesson we are supposed to derive from this politicized tale, it is that the missionary zeal of the Americans in Vietnam is bound to do more harm than good. Fowler, an English journalist through whose disenchanted eyes the story is viewed, has tried to remain aloof from these conflicts, these purely political passions. He longed for permanence even though he did not believe in it. Happiness was ephemeral. Nothing lasted. "Death was the only absolute value in my world. . . . I envied those who could believe in a God, and I distrusted them. I felt they were keeping their courage up with a fable of the changeless and the permanent." Death, however final, at least reprieved one from the nightmare of loss.

Though God is generally present in Greene's fiction, even in his "entertainments," He is not the protagonist of the tale nor does He ever function as a *deus ex machina*. He is a strangely hidden, infinitely patient, and mysterious God. Wisely Greene does not attempt to explain or justify the ways of God, which are in any event inscrutable, but concerns himself with the search of troubled and sinful men to find the peace that passeth understanding. They do not find it, of course, though they may achieve it after they die. Who knows? The issue is left in doubt. But what makes for extreme dramatic tension in Greene's religious novels is that the search for God remains paradoxical, enigmatic, unattainable. Furthermore, what reinforces the psychological complexity of the effect is that Greene never fails to bring in the counterpointing element of doubt, temptation, evil, sacrilege, heresy, and even blasphemy. Man, easily tempted to fall, measures out his days in this desperate oscillation between sin and the hunger

for redemption. Always there looms before him, like a light shining in darkness, the hope of salvation, only he must reach out for it.

Thus it is not God but man, afflicted, terrified by the imminence and finality of death, torn between good and evil, feverishly seeking to make his peace—it is man who is the central character in Greene's fictional tragedies. Marie-Beatrice Mesnet, in her essay "Graham Greene and the Heart of the Matter," declares: "When all is said, God is the principal character in Greene's tragedies, the 'third man' we unconsciously seek." This is a mistaken view of the matter. If God were the principal character in Greene's tragedies, then they would cease to be tragedies. No, in each of Greene's religious novels the emphasis is on the agony of the search, the evil that dwells in the heart of man, the impotence of human beings when they depend on their own finite powers, their longing for the absolute. God remains unknowable, and the only certainty is, as in *Brighton Rock*, that of damnation. But if God is not the principal character, He is always present in the background. Greene's most poignant scenes occur when man, trapped in the midst of life, strives to commune directly with God and seems to hear God say that failure is not what it seems, that life is not all evil or a thing of sound and fury. The experience lasts but a moment, and when it is over the one who has beheld this vision can never be certain that he has received a genuine message.

The truly religious insight of Greene emerges not in any echo of theological teaching but in his faith that God made man in His image and that this image can never be obliterated completely. Man can never destroy the potentialities of the divine in the depths of the self, even though as a fallen creature he fights against God. Greene is aware, of course, of the thorny contradictions to be found in his interpretation of God and his conception of grace. Faith works paradoxically and incomprehensibly. The agony is part of the search, the price of gaining the vision of God. If the sinner is to escape from his torment, if the earth-bound self is to gain the peace that it longs for, then this can only come to pass in death, in the presence of God. In this sense, Greene's vision of escape is indeed eschatological. But if Greene is possessed by this faith, he is too sensitive and conscientious an artist to omit the evidence that contradicts his faith. Respecting the limits of his art, he tries to describe the lacerating conflicts of conscience, the sense of loss, the experience of evil, the anguish of doubt and disbelief. Particularly in the throes of sinning—that is the religious dialectic Greene employs most effectively—does the religious feeling of his main characters reach great intensity. Miserable, tainted, tortured,

it is through suffering that they come closer to God and gain a deeper, luminous insight into spiritual reality. When they are most abandoned, when they feel utterly lost, it is then they turn in despair to God. That is how Greene imaginatively reiterates one of his dominant obsessions, namely, that it is the sinner who unwittingly achieves sainthood, though the issue forever hangs in doubt. The tragedy remains, evil is not vanquished, the quest for God must go on.

It is this concentration on the compulsion of sin, this uncertainty as to the will of God and the disposition of the soul beyond the grave, this haunting awareness of the evils of the flesh and the corruptibility of the heart—it is this which lends dramatic power to Greene's novels so that they can be read with absorption by non-believers as well as believers. For though these characters as Catholics pose the problem in theological terms of damnation and original sin, what they are basically concerned with is human destiny, the need for wholeness, the urge toward transcendence. Indeed, this is the ruling motif in Greene's novels. He does not gloss over the ugly and bitter truth of life. He is not composing religious tracts for the times but is endeavoring to shadow forth the human essence in all its refractory and numinous mysteriousness. If he exalts the blessedness of achieved faith, he is also cognizant, no modern novelist more so, of the horror that infects life.

It is interesting to note that Sean O'Faolain, himself a Catholic, objects strongly to Greene's conception of man as no longer free to choose. Thus O'Faolain contends, in *The Vanishing Hero*, that Greene, working with such a conception of human nature, tends to degrade man. His characters are introduced in order to embody a theological doctrine, a symbolic obsession. "Faith, for him, is not a gift, it is won from Despair. . . . His hope of heaven depends on the reality of hell. He believes in God because he believes in Satan." O'Faolain suspects that Greene is really writing not fiction but modern miracle plays. Concentrating as he does on the universality of evil, Greene finally winds up with the paradoxical thesis that evil leads not only to repentance but to God—a God who has a special affection for the wicked.

This doctrinal argument scarcely bothers the untheological reader. What some readers may find hard to understand is Greene's obsession with original sin, his fixation on absolute evil. What does absolute evil consist of? Drunkenness? Indulgence in sensuality? Discussing Greene's work in *The Emperor's Clothes*, Kathleen Nott says: "You can write a human book about a Catholic if you do not at the same time write a book about Catholic theories of human nature." The

answer to that, of course, is that Greene is a novelist who is not concerned with theories or doctrines but with the difficult task of composing a work of art. He is a Catholic novelist who is not writing about Catholicism but about men and women who are Catholics and who fall into sin and who suffer for their sins. He is not demonstrating the inexorable working out of Catholic dogma but illustrating the intrusion of mystery in the unfolding pattern of human fate. He is using the material of the Christian mythos to exhibit the tragic struggle in which the soul of man is involved. In short, in composing his tragic novels, he rises above the pull of theological considerations. It is these qualities in his fiction which we have analyzed—his tendency to identify himself with all of mankind, the guilty as well as the innocent, his uncompromising revelation of the power of evil, his psychological interest in the sinful and the suffering, his all-embracing compassion for the torments men endure as they finally face the certain knowledge of doom—it is these qualities that make him a tragic rather than a specifically Catholic novelist.

## Henry Fielding and the Cliché

Fielding's stylistic repetitions have been a great help in identifying his anonymous pamphlets, but, on the other hand, many quirks we take as exclusively Fielding's turn out to be, alas, widely shared by his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> Often typical Fielding proves the more nearly typical eighteenth century the further we look. And some of his most striking phrases turn out to be borrowed.

The following simile from *Joseph Andrews*, for instance—in spite of a gap in syntax—seems at first to show Fielding at his mock-Homeric best:

... as a voracious pike, of immense size, surveys through the liquid element a roach or gudgeon, which cannot escape her jaws, opens them wide to swallow the little fish; so did Mrs. Slipslop prepare to lay her violent amorous hands on the poor Joseph. . . . (I, vi)

Our admiration dims when we find "voracious pike" in nearly the same simile twice in *Jonathan Wild* (I, xi; II, i), and, finally, again in *Amelia*:

The great man received the money, not as a gudgeon doth a bait, but as a pike receives a poor gudgeon into his maw. To say the truth, such fellows as these may well be likened to that voracious fish, who fattens himself by devouring all the little inhabitants of the river. (XI, v)

And we may be completely unstrung at finding the phrasing really not quite Fielding's after all. Fielding's *The Champion* of December 15, 1739, extensively quotes and adapts a little book entitled *The*

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<sup>1</sup> See my Introduction to *Shamela* (Berkeley, 1953), pp. xiv-xv, and William B. Coley, "The Authorship of *An Address to the Electors of Great Britain*," *PQ*, XXXVI (1957), 490-91.

*Compleat Fisherman* (London, 1724) by James Saunders, making a satirical comparison of politics with fishing. In *The Champion* we find "the pike; a very voracious fish"—as Fielding borrows Saunders' epithet—who eats "all the small fish in the river," and, a little later, the gudgeon, whose "greedy nature . . . is known to almost every school-boy, and its readiness to bite at any thing hath grown into a proverb."

A proverb, then, is at the bottom of it. Saunders does not mention the gudgeon's foolish greed; he mentions him simply as pike bait. But it is the proverbial gudgeon—the eighteenth-century sucker—that seems to have fixed Saunders' "voracious pike," the image and the wording both, in Fielding's imagination.<sup>2</sup> And the pike passage suggests something further: though Fielding may repeat inadvertently, he does not mind repeating. In *Jonathan Wild*, his only book revised to any considerable extent, he left the two similar passages standing only thirteen pages apart with no changes whatsoever, and apparently with no embarrassment.<sup>3</sup>

The very expansiveness with which Fielding treats his favorite figures of speech reflects this willingness to be repetitious. The eighteenth century was very fond of referring to the gifts of Nature and Fortune, for instance—a glance at the Shakespeare concordance quickly turns up ten, which may account for the vogue. But all are brief, not much longer than Hamlet's "nature's livery, or fortune's

<sup>2</sup> I can find no instance of Fielding's using the word "voracious" before he borrows it from Saunders for his *Champion* essay. These passages show the curious persistence and lag of the verbal memory. Saunders' recommendation of roach and gudgeon as bait for pike does not get into the *Champion* essay at all, merely becoming a recommendation to use small bait in politics, and suggesting the allusion to gudgeon (unconnected with pike) two paragraphs further on. But two years later, roach and gudgeon appear together, as in Saunders' account, as bait for the voracious pike of *Joseph Andrews*. In *Amelia*, ten years later, the gudgeon's proverbial greed, Fielding's own addition to Saunders' remarks, returns for the first time since *The Champion*, and the passage ends with almost exactly the same words (again reappearing for the first time) that Fielding had borrowed from Saunders to close his first "voracious pike" paragraph.

<sup>3</sup> The second instance opens the Book which introduces Heartfree to the story, an aspect and section which, Digeon (*The Novels of Fielding*, London, 1925, pp. 118-122) argues convincingly, Fielding added to an original draft concerning Wild alone. Digeon shows that *Jonathan Wild* was extensively revised. Fielding looked at both the pike passages for his 1754 revision: to one he adds a footnote; to the other, a "with which" (Charles Marston Clark ed., *The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, unpub. diss., Cornell University, 1942, p. 50; Aurelien Digeon, *Le Texte des Romans de Fielding*, Paris, 1923, p. 13).



star" (I, iv, 32). Of Fielding's several uses of the figure,<sup>4</sup> his best is, typically, the most expansive:

Allworthy . . . might well be called the favourite of both Nature and Fortune; for both of these seem to have contended which should bless and enrich him most. In this contention Nature may seem to some to have come off victorious, as she bestowed on him many gifts, while Fortune had only one gift in her power; but in pouring forth this, she was so very profuse, that others perhaps may think this single endowment to have been more than equivalent to all the various blessings which he enjoyed from Nature. From the former of these he derived an agreeable person, a sound constitution, a sane understanding, and a benevolent heart; by the latter, he was decreed to the inheritance of one of the largest estates in the county. (I, ii)

This leisurely exploration of a cliché may also be seen in the famous "Bill of Fare" introductory to *Tom Jones*. Fielding had first used both the phrase and the parallel between literature and food in his preface to *Don Quixote in England* (1734)—fifteen years before. Congreve had used the phrase prominently in *The Way of the World*, as Mirabell sets forth the "Bill of Fare" for his marriage. The very *Apology* of Colley Cibber that Fielding delights to beat contains this in its opening pages:

(. . . I shall make no scruple of leaving my history, when I think a digression may make it lighter for my reader's digestion). (Everyman, p. 7)

And Cibber's introduction to his *The Character and Conduct of Cicero* (1747)—two years before *Tom Jones*—has this:

After having thus shewn to my Guest his Bill of Fare, it were but decent, before he sits down to the Table, to offer, by way of Grace to it, a due Oblation to the Founder of the Feast. . . .

But where Cibber has a sentence Fielding has a chapter. Fielding not only extends and savors the possibilities in the cliché, he also, like any good writer, revives the metaphorical meaning in words faded to abstraction, making the physical particulars again visible in the fore-

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Andrews III, i; *Amelia*, VIII (wrongly numbered "VII" in Everyman), viii; cf. also "Essay on Nothing," and "An Essay on Conversation," Henley ed., *Works*, XIV, pp. 314 and 251, and the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, *Works*, XII, 245.

ground of the general idea. This is, of course, a kind of punning. Fielding's "Bill of Fare" gives back to the word *taste*, for example, its original gustatory sense, speaking of a writer who serves a meal "utterly disagreeable to the taste of his company," and so forth. Fielding's whole chapter is, indeed, a single metaphorical pun on the various tastes in literary food.<sup>5</sup> This may not sound very exciting to twentieth-century ears. The idea was and is trite. But there is a kind of alert attention to the meanings of words—indeed, an apparent pleasure in turning and examining the commonplace figure of speech in different lights—that actually gives the writing a life that hasn't dimmed yet, and probably never will.<sup>6</sup>

Other writers, of course, attempt much the same thing. Here is Cibber having fun with a popular and persistent phrase (*Woman's Wit*, 1697, I, i, p. 4-5):

I never knew your fine set-up-Woman of Quality, that did  
not spend three parts of her Life in studying the Art of *Je-ne-  
sçais-Quoyity*.

Here is a much blander instance in the epilogue to Elijah Fenton's *Mariamme* (1723), which Fielding commends in *Joseph Andrews* (III, x):

*To hear him flatter, sigh, implore, protest,  
A . . . je ne sçai quoi! . . . will flutter in the breast.*

And it is curious to see Fielding inserting this same very British Gallicism into a completely new scene he added to his version of Molière's *The Miser* (1733, III, iv), ending his scene, indeed, with this commonplace flourish: "I am in love with, *Le je ne sçai quoi*." But the real apotheosis comes in *Tom Jones* (IV, ii)—Fielding is speaking of social ease:

. . . it hath charms so inexpressible, that the French, perhaps,  
among other qualities, mean to express this when they declare  
they know not what it is. . . .

<sup>5</sup> The N.E.D. lists Milton (1671) as the first user of *taste* to mean aesthetic perception. For Fielding's preliminary working out of this metaphor at length see the letter signed Heliogabalus in *The True Patriot* for December 13, 1745 (Cross II, 39-40).

<sup>6</sup> Fielding's apparent enjoyment of his work has been noticed by others: Emmett L. Avery, "Fielding's Last Season with the Haymarket Theatre," *MP*, XXXV (1938), 292; George Sherburn, "Introduction," *Tom Jones*, Modern Library College Edition (1950), p. xiv; Alan D. McKillop, *The Early Masters of English Fiction* (University of Kansas Press, 1956), p. 132.

An even better example is Fielding's use of the very common expression "solid comfort." He has no qualms about using it to express the summum bonum of *Tom Jones*, the "solid inward comfort of mind" of his dedicatory letter, and the "solid content" reiterated later by Jones (XII, x). In the Preface to his *Miscellanies* Fielding himself refers to his wife, then dangerously ill, as "one from whom I draw all the solid comfort of my life." (Henley, XII, 247). It is a solid phrase, solidly used, gathering force from its very currency and dependability. But Fielding is also able to use its commonplace reliability for a double irony as he likens the differing hypocrisies of Bridget Allworthy and her suitor Captain Blifil, the single cliché, slightly varied, giving a kind of archetypal sanction to the phrase's double edge, twice used. In the following passage, the "solid comfort" Bridget expects is, as the context slyly and ironically tells us, graphically sexual, indeed, downright phallic; that Blifil expects is monetary—hard cash, as it were:

She imagined, and perhaps very wisely, that she should enjoy more agreeable minutes with the captain than with a much prettier fellow; and forewent the consideration of pleasing her eyes, in order to procure herself much more solid satisfaction.

The captain likewise very wisely preferred the more solid enjoyments he expected with this lady, to the fleeting charms of person. (I, xi)

This passage depends, for maximum effect, on the reader's conditioned expectation of the familiar words: "solid comfort." And the result is two stages of interest, the first in the simple variations of "satisfaction" and "enjoyments," the second in the new burst of a meaning there all the time.

It seems clear, in the long run, that Fielding is using his clichés deliberately, using the common expectation as a base for variations of phrase and meaning. He sometimes, of course, uses them simply as they are, as durable foundations of the language. No doubt he sometimes falls into the customary phrase, and then makes the best of it, but even this depends on a kind of shared understanding between author and reader, an acceptance of a common manner of speaking and a common aphoristic truth. But for the most part, quite contrary to the twentieth-century writer, Fielding seems to seek his clichés out. And the frequency of the same figures of speech among eighteenth-

century writers suggests that there is some value in the commonplace the twentieth century misses.

But Fielding goes further with the cliché than any of his contemporaries. Perhaps no metaphor, trite or otherwise, has ever been so humorously extended as the one with which Fielding frames an entire episode of three chapters in *Tom Jones* (V, x-xii)—the popular eighteenth-century cliché that courtship is like the hunting of hares or deer or (occasionally) foxes. It would be hard to find a figure more common. Here is Cibber, for instance, in *The Careless Husband* (1705, I, i, p. 8):

... I cannot see why a Man that can ride Fifty Miles after a poor Stag, should be asham'd of running Twenty in Chace of a fine Woman, that, in all probability, will make him so much the better Sport too.

Fielding uses this figure a number of times,<sup>7</sup> but never with such persistence and with such apparent relish as in the long episode that finds Jones drunk, dreaming of Sophia beside the brook, and succumbing to Molly Seagrim only to fight Thwackum and Blifil in the end, with Western joining in. It is almost as if Fielding had set out actually to dramatize the familiar metaphor, reminding his readers of the reference from time to time, and bringing the commonplace figure to three-dimensional life before their eyes.

He had, in fact, used the figure dramatically in one of his plays. In *The Grub-Street Opera* (1731), Fielding's first fighting parson—Puzzletext, a collegiate boxer as we here in *Tom Jones*, for the first time, discover Parson Thwackum to be—sings a duet with his young master and pupil which simply works out the rabbit-girl metaphor in two parts, complete with the familiar pun on "sport." The parson sings of a "brushing hare," and the young man of a "brushing lass" lying in another part of the field. The parson has just admonished his pupil to govern his passions. So Thwackum—who (accompanied by Blifil) attempts to teach Jones a lesson as he lies in the brush with Molly Seagrim: "The way through which our hunters were to pass in pursuit of their game was so beset with briars," the metaphor begins, that their noise "abundantly satisfied Jones that he was (to use the language of sportsmen) found sitting." Then the metaphor ascends to a long and elegant mock-Homeric reference to the mating season,

<sup>7</sup> *Don Quixote in England* I, ii; *The Lottery*, Air V; *Shamela*, p. 71; *Tom Jones* X, vi and XVII, iv.

with Jones the stag and Molly the doe. After the fight with Thwackum and Blifil, Western asks the cause:

Thwackum said surlily, 'I believe the cause is not far off; if you beat the bushes well you may find her . . . if you put the laws in execution, as you ought to do, you will soon rid the country of these vermin.'

'I would as soon rid the country of foxes,' cries Western. 'I think we ought to encourage the recruiting those numbers which we are every day losing in the war. But where is she? Prithee, Tom, show me.' He then began to beat about, in the same language and in the same manner as if he had been beating for a hare; and at last cried out, 'Soho! Puss is not far off. Here's her form, upon my soul; I believe I may cry stole away.' And indeed so he might; for he had now discovered the place whence the poor girl had, at the beginning of the fray, stolen away, upon as many feet as a hare generally uses in travelling.

There is pleasure in this writing. The rabbit-girl cliché is a perennial joke Fielding is returning to, elaborating, and dramatizing, especially in Western's characteristic vocabulary and with Western's colorful character: the huntsman actually acts out the commonplace metaphor in a kind of inevitable and inadvertent comic mime. The cliché serves to point up Jones's waywardness as another example of the standing joke about how upsetting the passions can be, reminding us they will do it every time, and at the same time the cliché points up the comic *idée fixe*—that all life is a rabbit hunt—upon which Western's character depends.

And here, perhaps, is the underlying significance of the cliché in Fielding's writing, and in the eighteenth century in general. Fielding looks for the durable and typical ideas just as he looks for the permanent types of character. Both represent the lasting truths of human nature. "I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species." His clichés are like his Latin tags: the most common, the ones men return to most frequently as epitomes of experience, and with a kind of amused pleasure at finding them suddenly fitting the new context with all the old pertinence. Fielding's particular power over the cliché lies in his ability to dress the natural old truths, so often said, to new advantage, making them seem, with his alert wit, never so well expressed, making—as Johnson was to recommend—the familiar seem new. It is, of course, an art the eighteenth century understood.

And the familiarity leads to one final point: Fielding, with the men of his times, wrote as he talked—he “chats,” as George Eliot was first to point out<sup>8</sup>—and the repeated and elaborated cliché, the favorite old hat of speech, is characteristic of the talker. He knows he repeats himself. He knows his audience knows it. He knows his audience knows he knows. His language begins to tingle with suppressed mutual amusement as he and his listeners sense the approach of the old familiar fedora—and then it appears with a new and elaborate flourish, giving the surprise with the expected fulfilment. Something like this works within the genteel leisure of Fielding’s clichés. Some of his best surprises are in his expansive and attentive exploration of the latent power in the old familiar words, round and common as pebbles, which he can usually send pretty straight to the mark.

<sup>8</sup> *Middlemarch* II, vi. See also James Sutherland, “Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Prose,” *Essays on the Eighteenth Century, Presented to David Nichol Smith* (Oxford, 1945), pp. 94-110; and Herbert Davis, “The Conversation of the Augustans,” *The Seventeenth Century* by Richard F. Jones et al. (Stanford University Press, 1951), pp. 181-197.



## NOTE

In the first (Winter) issue of *Criticism*, 1959, Professor G. Ingli James, on page 63, says that "Mr. [Cleanth] Brooks once described himself to me as the hangman of Romanticism." This statement has elicited an expression of concern from Mr. Brooks about the way in which his apparent acceptance of the title "hangman of Romanticism" might be construed. Professor James has commented as follows in a letter: "The conversation took place sometime during the academic year 1953-1954 when I was doing independent research work at Yale as a Commonwealth Fellow. As far as I can remember W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and René Wellek were also present. The occasion was (obviously) a more memorable one for me than for them." And in a general statement he has added, "I cannot believe that any serious or careful reader would conclude from what I said that I had heard Professor Brooks confess to the title 'hangman of Romanticism' without any kind of qualification or reservation. The whole point of my article was that there is more than one kind of Romanticism, and that it is primarily the critical tradition which tends to define poetry almost exclusively in terms of the expression of emotion which the New Critics usually seem to have in mind when the talk gets around to heresy and hanging. I was—and still am—under the impression that it is the Romantic tradition defined thus. . . ."

THE EDITOR

## Book Reviews

*The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* by Jean H. Hagstrum. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Plates. Pp. xxii + 338. \$7.50.

Today the phrase *ut pictura poesis* belongs mainly to historians of the arts and of criticism; but there was a time when it reverberated with practical meaning for painters and poets and for theorists of both arts. From the day of Leonardo's *Paragone* until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the old phrase, pulled somewhat roughly from its context in Horace's *Ars Poetica*, served almost automatically as the motto of scores of essays, poems, and treatises on the sisterhood of the arts, giving what appeared to be the sanction of antiquity to any effort at tracing out the correspondences between painting and poetry. Sometimes the results that came out under its banner were so general and fragmentary as to be insignificant; for some writers it was enough to assert gracefully that the arts were affectionate sisters and then move on, leaving the baser work of demonstration to others. But often the comparison of one art with another was treated with genuine solidity and seriousness, as a liberal exercise with its own intrinsic interest, or as a means of clearing up difficult issues such as that of *imitation*, or as a possible clue to fresh resources for the practicing artist. "It is by the analogy that one art bears to another," said Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Seventh Discourse*, "that many things are ascertained, which either were but faintly seen, or, perhaps, would not have been discovered at all, if the inventor had not received the first hints from the practice of a sister art on a similar occasion." This may be taken as a characteristic opinion, and in itself a sufficient explanation for the power of suggestion in such a tag as *ut pictura poesis*, or its companion from Simonides, "Painting is silent poetry, and poetry a speaking picture." But in the face of constant theoretical assurances about the sisterhood of the two arts, especially during the period from Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica* (1637) to Reynolds' *Discourses*, a reader is bound to ask himself just how much of this is a critical game, and how much is really operative in the painting and poetry of the time. To what extent were painters and poets influenced in their own workshops by the "parallels" that they knew from traditional and modern sources? Much has already been written on this many-sided topic—enough to show that more should be useful. Professor Hagstrum's book is an attempt to meet the question (or the literary half of it) directly, by examining the pictorial elements in the work of five poets—Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Collins, and Gray—against the background of their known acquaintance with painting and painters, their theoretical views if they expressed any, and their use of various pictorial and "iconic" conventions.

The first half of the book is devoted to the tradition of literary pictorialism, ranging from the ancient "iconic" poem and the rhetorical ideal of *enargeia* ("the vivid and lifelike reproduction in verbal art of natural detail") through medieval and Renaissance conceptions of the pictorial, and ending in the qualified rejection of pictorialism by Lessing and Burke. The story is intricate and full

of great names—Homer, Horace and Plutarch, Dante and Ariosto, Spenser and Shakespeare, not to mention a host of others—and Professor Hagstrum tries to keep the most significant painters involved in the scene as well. In view of the scope and learning of these initial chapters, it is unfortunate that the principal emotion they arouse is impatience. There is a persistent shifting of focus; a reader does not yet know what he is being asked to regard as centrally important for the study of the poets in Part Two who are ostensibly the subject of the book, and it is plainly impossible to take everything in the historical panorama as equally significant. The continuity is disturbingly cut up by tangential impressions and incidental analogies, so that the relations among the many suggested points of contact between poetry and painting are left blurred and insubstantial. Despite the summary of theoretical ground-rules for the book that Professor Hagstrum offers on pp. xxi-xxii, one has the uneasy sensation that concepts are often being manipulated in such a way as to avoid difficult questions, and that the definition of even such a crucial term as "pictorial" lacks consistency, since at different places it is made responsible for so many different things. When a reader comes to the assertion on p. 157 that "The word 'pictorial,' as it has been used in these pages, is a general term that includes the critical notion of *enargeia*, the genre of iconic verse, particular image, and total form—everything, in fact, that we have discussed from antiquity to the eighteenth century," he must be hard pressed to interpret that "everything," or to see how a concept so capacious is going to yield any very distinct results.

Though Professor Hagstrum finds that all five of the poets of Part Two shared an appreciative understanding of the tradition of *ut pictura poesis*, an informed interest in painting, and a commitment to pictorialism in their own work, he has a well-justified objection to studies of the interrelations of the arts that are dedicated mainly to a pursuit of the *Zeitgeist*, and his own study is largely free of that tendency. The little that appears is confined to such collective formulas as "the Renaissance" and "the eighteenth century," which are so convenient as to be almost unavoidable. But restraint in this quarter is pretty well offset by license in another, in such a passage as this from the end of the chapter on Pope:

One entire side of Dryden's imagination can be illuminated by a comparison with Rubens, who is not consistently congenial to the genius of Pope. Rubens is of course occasionally relevant, but Pope's scene is so endlessly varied that no single painter and no single school within the large tradition can claim dominant rights. The "Rape of the Lock" suggests the grace of Correggio; "Windsor Forest" has Claude-like moments; "Eloisa" recalls Salvator Rosa. The "Temple of Fame" alternately reminds us of classical marbles, Bernini, Raphael, and perhaps also of the Farnese ceiling of Annibale Carracci.

Perhaps; it would be a bold man who would say categorically that these are false lights. But it is in part this atmosphere of lax association, the reliance upon being "reminded" of one thing by another, as though reminiscence established some firm and consequential connection between a painting and a poem, that damages a reader's confidence in the theoretical logic of the book.

For all that, the five chapters on the poets from Dryden to Gray contain rich stores of information, and turn up many useful correlations with the tradition of

the speaking picture. Of these, the one with the longest history is the "iconic" poem, to use Professor Hagstrum's name for it. This is a poem that describes or interprets or even emulates the effect of a particular work of graphic art, real or imaginary. Such poetry constitutes a little genre of its own, with a grand prototype in Homer's famous description of the shield of Achilles, but with more modest examples from the *Greek Anthology* and elsewhere to supply most of its conventional features. Typically, an iconic poem celebrates the vividness of a painting or a statue in which the figures have such life in them that they seem to think and speak; sometimes the poem is in part the imagined utterance of such figures. The poem may or may not pile up sensory detail in an effort to create a comparable vividness in words. Instead, the point may be to furnish a poetical pendant, a sort of formal inscription, for the original. Professor Hagstrum has drawn together an instructively large collection of poems belonging to this tradition, and has shown their affiliations with the epigram, the emblem, and the masque; and one encounters such poems and passages in Michelangelo, Spenser, Marino, and Jonson, as well as in Dryden, Pope, and Gray, with a satisfactory feeling that they take on tone from their participation in a minor but attractive convention.

With another long-standing convention the results are less persuasive: namely, the "gallery" device for organizing a poem. Under this metaphor, a long poem might be viewed as a picture gallery containing a number of set pieces, whether portraits, landscapes, or histories. Marino and Pierre le Moyne are cited as having made deliberate use of this device, and Marvell's "Gallery" provides a small but apt illustration; later on, the idea comes in for brief mention in the best essay in the book, the chapter on Thomson. It is less compelling, though still within bounds, to find "Absalom and Achitophel" advanced into the pictorial category as a gallery of portraits. But when Professor Hagstrum proposes that the "Rape of the Lock" might best be seen in the same way—that it is not so much a mock-heroic narrative with supporting pictures as a picture gallery with some supporting narrative links—one can only say that this is too much of a good thing. The sisterhood of poetry and painting need not be bought at so dear a price.

It would be barbarous to close so brief a review as this without acknowledging that it is far from just to the range of materials in the book and the impressiveness of its learning. The critical shortcomings have been stressed here because they are pervasive and color all the findings from first to last: the book is not for tyros. But for students of the historical inter-relations of the arts it should be a valuable challenge, since there is no other work in the field so comprehensive and so full of things that have to be remembered.

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*Selected Essays* by Robert Penn Warren. New York: Random House, 1958.  
Pp. xiii + 305. \$4.00.

This is a hamper of old essays and reviews, including much that is well worth reprinting, if not quite a volume of selected essays. The longest and most important essay is the one on *The Ancient Mariner*, which has been so widely discussed and attacked, and most of the remainder deal with contemporary writers

of fiction. As the author himself suggests, they do not represent a consistent philosophy of criticism, but simply a trained and cultivated intelligence brought to bear on a variety of literary problems. Some of the essays date a little, either because the subject does or because the essay is a review of a book that has nothing except that book for its context. The essay on Thomas Wolfe, for instance, is apparently a contemporary review of *Of Time and the River*. The points made about Wolfe, which move politely in the direction of saying that he hasn't any brains, are accurate enough, but they are without benefit of any reference to the later *You Can't Go Home Again*, surely one of the most mindless books ever written. Similarly the discussion of "Melville the Poet" is hampered by being restricted to the Matthiessen selection being reviewed. The opening essay, "Pure and Impure Poetry," on the other hand, dates because its subject does. There was a good deal of talk about pure poetry some years ago, but it never got anywhere: the only pure poet I know of was the dormouse in *Alice in Wonderland*, who kept saying "tinkle, tinkle" in his sleep until he was shaken to make him stop. One may speak of pure oxygen, but hardly of a pure tree or a pure weasel, and poetry has more in common with organisms than with elements. Mr. Warren struggles valiantly with his theme, saying that poetry wants to be pure but poems do not, and making many astute comments about various poems on the way, but the unreality of the subject defeats him.

Of the other essays and reviews, those on Faulkner and Hemingway are well rounded and comprehensive: the author knows Faulkner's world, and sets out clearly the Romantic components of Hemingway's, suggesting a Wordsworthian ancestry for his "dumb ox" and a Byronic one for his gallant tough guy. The essay on Conrad, based mainly on *Nostromo*, is perhaps less successful, because Hemingway's flat, two-dimensional, pseudo-primitive settings with their humorous (in the Jonsonian sense) characters lend themselves much more easily to exposition than Conrad's subtler and solidier techniques. The essays on Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty are appreciative and impersonal, though the latter is so dependent on specific comment that it is hardly independent of the books discussed. In the essay on Frost, where quotation is easier, we have some careful and well-chosen comments on the imagery, and the fact that the "sleep" of "Stopping by Woods" is not just a bed for the night, which so annoyed the readers of Mr. Ciardi in the *Saturday Review* recently, is illustrated by having similar poems placed beside it.

In the essay on *The Ancient Mariner*, I have no difficulty with Mr. Warren's actual analysis of the poem, or with his account of Coleridge's use of the sun and moon imagery. I am less happy with the attempts to state in words what the central themes of the poem are (or are "about"), as I am not sure that this is a valid critical procedure. When Mr. Warren says that the poem is written out of, and about, a general belief "That the truth is implicit in the poetic act as such, that the moral concern and the aesthetic concern are aspects of the same activity, the creative activity, and that this activity is expressive of the whole mind" (italicized in the original) I do not find him as convincing as he is when he is talking about the symbolic convergence of wind, bird and moon imagery. The conclusion is a finely argued attack on the intentional fallacy, pointing out that the only thing the poet intends is to make a poem, that the legitimate question is "What does this poem say here?" and not "What did the poet mean by this?" and that interpretations are not things, to be got by one reader and

"missed" by another. The more theoretical discussion of Coleridge's conception of symbolism is more tenuous. Certain essential points are made, such as Coleridge's extraordinary anticipations of the theory of the unconscious symbolism of dreams, which are of much relevance, however much later expressed, to a poem so dreamlike as *The Ancient Mariner*. But Mr. Warren seems preoccupied with the pseudo-problem, set up by other critics, of the amount of serious meaning that is consistent with a fantastic theme. The essay is overlong, tackles too many side issues, and is, with its long footnotes, cumbersome to read, but it remains in its core an essential and illuminating discussion of a great poem.

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*Poetic Discourse* by Isabel C. Hungerland. University of California Publications in Philosophy, Volume 33. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958. Pp. iv + 177. \$3.00.

Isabel C. Hungerland devotes the first chapter of *Poetic Discourse* to a number of basic questions involving language and poetry: what is the difference between poetic discourse and scientific discourse? What is connotation and how does it function in poetic discourse? What is emotion and what is the quality of emotion evoked by poetry? What is the nature and function of tone in poetry?

Forcefully rejecting a dichotomy between descriptive language and emotive language as well as "the notion that the logical ideals of classification and division, as set forth in the textbooks, should be attained" (p. 5) in defining the language of poetic discourse, Dr. Hungerland concludes that "poetry cannot be characterized in terms of any kind of linguistic meaning or device peculiar to it" (p. 7). There is not a special language for poetry though there have been periods in literary history when critics thought there was and some poets followed the critics' thinking.

Dr. Hungerland draws a useful and valid distinction between word connotations and word associations: connotation results from "shared experience," association from the individual's experience, which may or may not be idiosyncratic. Words in isolation have connotations as well as associations, but it must be recognized that context may powerfully control connotation. "The suggestive power of language, the power that links objects to contexts, is rightly regarded as the chief means by which literature depicts and evokes emotion" (p. 18).

Though lacking some of the clarity of other parts of her discussion, Dr. Hungerland's treatment of emotion leads to a number of interesting and valid—though by no means new—conclusions. Emotion in literature is evoked "by depicting characters living in a certain way in certain situations" (p. 20). The reader undergoes not "participator emotions" but "spectator emotions"; the distinction indicates quite validly the difference between the emotions depicted and those experienced by the reader. Rather than positing an absolute, qualitative difference between the emotions evoked by "real life" situations and those evoked by literature, Dr. Hungerland points for "aesthetic emotions" to a lessening or truncating of the tendencies to action stimulated by "real life" emotions. She concludes that there are not two species of emotions but rather at times—and only

at times—certain differences between “aesthetic emotions” and those stimulated by reality. One can be stimulated to giving financial aid to remedy a social abuse by reading a factual newspaper account or by reading a particularly moving short story or poem dealing with the same abuse. On the other hand, one is not moved to kill Othello for the jealousy that resulted in Desdemona’s murder; the sane spectator does not confuse reality with the world of the stage. But, Dr. Hungerland would maintain, the emotion aroused by an Othello in “real life” and that aroused by him on the stage are essentially the same, though one might lead to action and the other not.

Particularly valuable for college teachers of poetry who may want to quote “authority” in their inevitable attempts to dissuade their undergraduates from insisting that a poem means whatever the reader wants it to mean or whatever the reader’s “free associations” touched off by words in the poem seem to make it mean is the following statement: “In a poem, associations are not ‘free’ (controlled only by a reader’s unconscious problems, mood, background, and so on), because a poem is not a word list—it is a structure of phrase, clause, sentence. It is part of the poet’s craft to control the direction of suggestion and evocation in the composition of the various linguistic units employed” (p. 26). Dr. Hungerland also takes exception to the idea that verbal ambiguities should be elevated “into a universal criterion of excellence”—an idea that has sent many an undergraduate on a wild goose chase resulting in utterly undemonstrable readings of a poem.

Chapter I concludes with a discussion of tone and the elements involved in both its creation by the poet and its recognition by the reader. The whole discussion might have been made more meaningful and valuable by a much more extensive analysis of Yeats’ “Her Praise,” which is only briefly touched on.

Chapter II, “Literature as an Art: Poetry and Truth,” while pointing out that “the medium of poetry is living language” (p. 43) and not a special kind of language, also recognizes that the paraphrasable meaning of a poem is not the poem. It is not necessary, nevertheless, to assume that the essence of a poem is something to be dealt with only through some kind of mystic super-vision. Dr. Hungerland conceives of a poem much as did Coleridge: “The interrelation of all [its] features and workings of language is what makes the poem” (p. 43). It is subject to various kinds of analysis, of which not the least is paraphrase.

Much of the rest of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of whether the poet—or literary writer, in general—has a special kind of knowledge about men and life. Dr. Hungerland concludes that there is “a common requirement for the art of writing and the science of psychology, and that is, perception beyond the routine and habitual of human beings in action” (p. 56). Literature can make the psychological theorist aware of previously neglected qualities of human behavior, but it does not formulate “explanatory universal propositions” about human behavior.

Chapter III deals with the ever-fascinating problem of appraisals of literary worth. The central weakness in this chapter is not the conclusions that are reached but rather the method of reaching them on an almost purely theoretical level. The student of literature accustomed to reading literary criticism from Aristotle’s *Poetics* on down feels a growing desperation because of the failure to supply enough specific, illustrative materials that might have made the discussion far more illuminating than it is. Nevertheless, there can be no quarrel with a



number of Dr. Hungerland's key statements: ratings of merit may be dissociated from personal preference; "there is no single, general rule or definition for artistic unity" (p. 77); "appraising objects and performances, whether artistic or not, is a matter of rating them on the basis of their having or not having, or having in high or low degree, certain characteristics. These characteristics, when thus employed, are criteria of worth" (p. 81). Dr. Hungerland refuses to accept the view that "there are no 'descriptive' (that is, empirically determinable) criteria for art . . ." (p. 81).

Before moving to a statement of her own position, Dr. Hungerland in some detail deals with what she calls the Naturalist position and its application to art. The position, she feels, is "an oversimplification of the situation in which appraisal takes place" (p. 91) and leads to a confusion between the statements "this is good" and "I like it." She justifies the use of criteria of artistic merit "by referring to the works of art, not to our enjoyment" (p. 96). This is another way of saying, "the criteria of excellence, whatever they may be, are not to be confused with the experts' excitement, gratification, satisfaction" (p. 99).

The chapter concludes with consideration of whether a work of art can be appraised as a work of art apart from its moral worth. Can a reader think highly of a poem that espouses moral judgments repugnant to the reader? The central question is tied to the Bollingen-Library of Congress Award in Poetry to Ezra Pound. While admitting the impossibility of dissociating "our likings of works of literature" from "the moral outlook of the author," Dr. Hungerland indicates the wide range of responses for different people in differing situations to different works and posits the need—moral rather than critical—for enlarging our capacities for "sympathizing with outlooks different from our own" (p. 104). Whether the award of the Bollingen prize to Pound was right is dismissed at the end of the chapter as a matter not of aesthetics but of public manners and morals.

Chapter IV, devoted to a discussion of figurative language, distinguishes figurative from literal statement as follows: "a figurative (sentential) expression is one which, when its component words are employed in the usual or customary way, turns out to be either a patently false or a nonsensical statement . . ." (p. 108). In addition, before a violation of language usage can be called a figurative statement, it must meet two conditions: it must be a deliberate violation and "there must be available a paraphrase or literal rendering of the expression in question" (p. 110).

To show that linguistic figures are closely related to human experiences and that their use in many kinds of discourse is "neither mysterious nor surprising," Dr. Hungerland discusses three kinds of experiences: first, the perceptual experience of "*seeing one thing as another*—for example, seeing the side of a hill as a human face" (p. 113); second, "treating a as b" when a is different from b; and third, allowing a to suggest certain elements of b. All three are common in everyday human experience and lead naturally enough to the making of figures and to accurate responses to figures (which are once again defined as "a kind of linguistic treatment of one thing as another") (p. 115).

There follows a discussion of the nature of the effectiveness of figures in poetry based on four "interrelated features which are mentioned in the literature on the subject: concreteness, condensation, suggestiveness, and the thwarting of the customary response to language and the releasing of a new response" (p. 119). Concreteness in this context comes to mean the power of a figure to focus the reader's attention on (and hence to control his response to) just those elements

in a statement most relevant to the poet's intention. Condensation is contrasted with the technique of accumulation (as in a Thomas Mann short story), the potentiality of each for achieving artistic excellence being adequately recognized. Condensation achieved through figurative language in poetry, however, may enable the poet to produce intensity of feeling—a point illustrated through an analysis of Robert Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time." Suggestiveness and the thwarting of customary responses together with the releasing of new ones are discussed in their interrelationships and illustrated through analysis of a few well-known lines of Dylan Thomas.

The concluding—and least rewarding—section of the chapter is devoted to imagery, the difficulties in defining it, and its place in poetry. Dr. Hungerland's criterion for recognizing imagery is as follows: "poetry contains or has images whenever it employs names for concrete, perceptible objects, or words which ascribe perceptible characteristics or sensuous qualities to them" (p. 132). Rejected as a criterion is "whether the language does produce or even just tends to produce imagery in the reader" (p. 132). Is there an implication here that professors of English should not be concerned with helping their students to understand and "see" Keats' "rainbow of the salt sand wave"?

Chapter V, "Symbols in Poetry," distinguishing between signs and symbols, offers the following statement as the basis for the discussion of symbols in poetry: ". . . in fictional contexts, when we transfer trains of thought and the related attitudes and feelings from one object to another, a symbol is established" (p. 138). It is Dr. Hungerland's contention that this very transference (of trains of thought, attitudes, feelings) is the only justification for the use of symbols in art. And it follows that symbols need not be concrete objects: anything capable of producing the transference may function as a symbol. Dr. Hungerland cites as possibilities "rhythmic and sound patterns, the general structure of a plot, and even a conventional stanza form . . ." (p. 140).

Because psychoanalysis makes much use of symbols and symbolism, Dr. Hungerland devotes a considerable section of the chapter to a discussion of psychoanalytic theory and shows its relevance in interpreting and evaluating literary works. She forcefully and admirably warns against the amateur's use of psychoanalysis to draw conclusions about an author's personality structure from a study of his works and, through a critique of Roy P. Basler's treatment of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," shows both the insights to be gained from the application of psychoanalytic knowledge to a poem and the limitations of such application. Similarly the Jungian "archetypal patterns" are recognized as having evocative power but their mere presence in a literary work does not guarantee "either a deeply moving experience or a work of artistic merit" (p. 155).

The brief concluding chapter, "The Interpretation of Poetry," discusses first the place of a knowledge of the author's intention in interpreting and evaluating a literary work. How does one come to know the author's intention and, when it is known, is it to be taken into account in making a critical judgment? After demonstrating some of the different ways in which different readers may approach a literary work, Dr. Hungerland shows that for some types of reading and evaluation the author's intention may be all-important, but for other types it may be quite unimportant. She recognizes the author as a "privileged, but not authoritative, reader of his work."

The final section of the chapter investigates some of the problems involved in

"reading" and "interpreting" literary works, but in this crucial area—indeed, the area toward which the whole volume leads—Dr. Hungerland is most disappointing. She concludes, in essence, that for any given literary work there may be interpretations "which may be said to be wrong or incorrect because they require us to make wrong or incorrect readings of the text, outlandish or implausible interpretations" requiring "strange, unusual interpretations of what is suggested, conveyed, or figured by the language," and finally "a set of alternative ways of explaining and seeing the work, none of which are [*sic*] wrong or implausible or odd—that is to say, they will all fit the work almost equally well" (p. 175). Though one may not wish to quarrel with the statement, it does not seem an adequate answer to the question raised initially in the chapter: of several interpretations of a poem or story or play, which is the "right" one and how can we tell?

*Poetic Discourse* is a carefully reasoned treatment of a number of major critical problems. Though most students of literature would find relatively little with which to disagree, they would also find relatively little that is new. Of value in the book, however, are Dr. Hungerland's precise accounts throughout of the reasoning leading to her several conclusions. Once again it must be said that what seems distressingly lacking is sufficient application of the conclusions to literary works.

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*An Introduction to the Arts of Japan* by Peter Swann. New York: Praeger, 1958. Plates. Pp. xi + 220. \$8.50.

A strange aftermath of the defeat and occupation of Japan has been the intense interest in the culture of that country, an interest which has resulted in a number of books on Japanese art of which this is the most recent. Covering the entire development of the art of Japan from the prehistoric beginnings to the end of the Edo period, this book, written by a young English scholar who is the curator of the Museum of Eastern Art at Oxford University and editor of *Oriental Art*, is a clearly written and comprehensive survey illustrated with one hundred and sixty-eight excellent black and white plates and one fine colored frontispiece. Unlike Mr. Yashiro in his recent book, *Two Thousand Years of Japanese Art*, Mr. Swann does not limit himself to painting and sculpture, but includes crafts, which adds a great deal to the usefulness of the book. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how the author could have left out architecture, for this is the very form which has had the greatest influence on our own art, aside from the fact that no account of the art of Japan can be complete in which neither Horyuji nor the Katsura palace are discussed. Another serious omission is the art of the last hundred years (which is referred to only in the closing paragraph), for whatever one may think about modern Japanese art, there is no denying that the tradition is still vital, and that much of interest continues to be produced.

Although there is little to quarrel with in this scholarly and carefully written book, there are a few statements which are open to question. For example, Mr. Swann writes, "Archaeologists are extremely cautious about dating either of these cultures [that is, Jomon and Yayoi] beyond saying that the stone age lasted from about the 10th century B. C. to the beginning of the Christian era. Some

scholars, however, place its beginnings much earlier, in the third millenium B.C." Although it is true that an accurate dating of these prehistoric cultures is very difficult, Japanese scholars working in the field as well as the leading Western expert, Professor Edward Kidder, whose recent book on Jomon pottery is the standard work in English, say that 3000 B.C. is the very last possible date and that recent carbon datings would tend to suggest that the Jomon civilization goes back to 5000 so that it extends over a longer period of time than all the rest of the history of that country.

The following sections of the book dealing with the Buddhist culture of the Asuka and Nara periods are particularly good, especially in citing and often illustrating the Chinese parallel to the developments in Japan. In the chapters on Heian and Kamakura art, which are generally excellent, there are two points where the author gives a false impression. One is that Yamato-e painting is almost wholly a development of the Kamakura period, when the fact is that the finest of these scrolls, including the animal caricature scroll which is reproduced in the Kamakura chapter, as well as the fan shaped sutra pictures from Shitenno-ji, and the Shigisan Engi scroll, are all of Heian date. The other point concerns the wooden image of Benzaiten which is discussed as if it were an erotic sculpture like those of Hellenistic Greece when actually it was meant to be dressed in garments so that the body would not have been seen.

The longest chapter in the book deals with the art of the Edo period. Here the author shows his open-mindedness most clearly, for he includes everything from Sotatsu to souvenir sketches, Satsuma ware and netsukes, although one cannot help but lament the absence of any folk art, a form which was particularly vital during this period. Again, there are certain statements with which this reviewer must disagree—for example, that most of Kenzan's work "stands near the Chinese tradition." Granted that the painting and the plate reproduced show some similarity to Chinese works of a certain type, the fact remains that the pottery for which Kenzan has become famous is bold and decorative with bright colors and vigorous abstract designs which are wholly Japanese and bear no resemblance to contemporary Chinese ceramics. Another questionable statement is that the many Imari wares of the late 17th century "are little short of ceramic monstrosities"; they "deserve the bad name they have among modern connoisseurs, but one should remember that they were made entirely to satisfy a European taste which the Japanese had shrewdly assessed." Though it is true that much of the Imari ware of the late nineteenth century was cheap export ware which can be found in curio shops throughout the world, the production of the 17th century, which today is rare and valuable, was mostly of very high quality and is sought after by collectors both in Japan and the West. No doubt some of the output was intended for export, but the bulk of it was for home consumption and expressed the splendid and decorative artistic tendencies of the Genroku period. Finally, there are two curious omissions in the Edo chapter which are difficult to explain in light of the fact that Ukiyo-e and Noh robes are discussed at some length, namely Kiyonaga, whom many regard as the best woodcut master, and Noh masks which are certainly the finest sculptures of this age. As a whole, however, this book is a very fine introduction to Japanese art, and an excellent addition to the literature on this subject.

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*The Third Voice: Modern British and American Verse Drama* by Denis Donoghue.  
Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1959. Pp. 286. \$5.00.

The "third voice" is, of course, Mr. Eliot's "voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse," and six of Mr. Donoghue's chapters are concerned, quite properly, with Eliot's plays. He dismisses in a few pages the plays written by nineteenth century poets and by James and Masfield; he has chapters on Yeats, Auden and Cummings, Fry, Pound's *Women of Trachis* and Eberhart. It is a thoughtful and thought-provoking book, containing some valuable insights; and if I concentrate in this review on my points of disagreement with Mr. Donoghue, I do not intend my criticisms to detract from this initial recommendation.

Mr. Donoghue begins, as any critic of modern verse drama must, with Ibsen's repudiation of verse so that he could devote himself to poetic creation "in the plain unvarnished speech of reality," though Ibsen later admitted (which Mr. Donoghue does not mention) that his attack on verse was due to a momentary irritation. Although most of Ibsen's followers failed to recognize that even in the plays of his middle period he was still a poet, the best poetic drama of the last eighty years has been in prose—Tchekhov, Strindberg, Yeats' *Words on the Window Pane*, Anouilh, Shaw. Shaw, indeed, in his old age, proclaimed that his real masters were Shakespeare, Mozart and Wagner. In spite of which, poet after poet has hoped to avoid the mistakes of his predecessors and create viable verse drama. They have realised that a play written in the Elizabethan style is bound to be stillborn, and from Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* onwards they have attempted in different ways to write verse closer to modern colloquial speech and to get away from the shadow of Shakespeare. Eliot himself has gone to *Everyman*, to Aeschylus, to Euripides and Sophocles. Auden, on the other hand, assumed that the music hall and the pantomime were more vital forms of theatre in our day than drawing-room comedy or problem plays, and he attempted to graft poetic drama on them.

Auden never achieved more than a coterie audience. Nevertheless I think that Mr. Donoghue is somewhat unfair to Auden and that he has accepted Leavis' view without enough scrutiny. He complains, for example, that some lines spoken by Mr. A in *The Ascent of F.6* are a weakened version of lines in *Sweeney Agonistes*. Apart from the fact that Auden's lines are rhymed and Eliot's not, the rhythms are quite different. Mr. A acts as a chorus; Sweeney is a character. Mr. A is a typical commuter, suffering from the boredom of respectable life in a modern industrial society; Sweeney is a criminal who suffers from a totally different kind of boredom in which life is reduced to birth, copulation and death. Auden's first dramatic work, *Paid on Both Sides*, is uninfluenced by Eliot; and though the influence of Eliot is apparent in much of his later work, Eliot in his turn was influenced by Auden. Again following Leavis, Mr. Donoghue complains that Auden lacks "the organisation corresponding to his local vitality," that the characters are ciphers, and that the play has no organic coherence. To which one might reply that Auden believed at that time that poetic drama should deal with types and symbols rather than "characters" and that E. M. Forster, in his brilliant analysis of the play, showed that it was organised with considerable skill on several different levels—the adventure story, the political satire, the use of vicarious excitement to compensate for suburban

boredom, the mother-fixation, and the temptation of leadership. The groundling would understand two or three of these meanings, but the more intelligent spectator would grasp them all. The real failure of the play—and Mr. Donoghue alludes to this also—is that Auden's prose is better than his verse, and that at moments where good poetry is required Auden produces Shakespearian *pastiche*, very clever and theatrically disastrous.

On Eliot's plays Mr. Donoghue has some shrewd things to say. He suggests that "the determining flaw in *Murder in the Cathedral* is that the imitation of its action is complete at the end of Part One" and he complains that the play "consists of a number of expressive segments which are related on the conceptual level" and that "the words seem to operate almost apart from the character and situation they are designed to serve." I would defend Eliot by saying that the resemblances between the style of *Ash Wednesday* and Thomas' speech are not inappropriate or disastrous if one regards the play as ritual rather than as pure drama. What is disastrous is the scene in which the prose speeches of the Knights destroy the atmosphere of the play for the sake of a contemporary moral. I am not objecting to anachronism as such, but to the crude use to which it is put.

Mr. Donoghue treats *The Family Reunion* as a transitional play and he criticises it mainly because the verse differentiates not between individuals but merely between groups:

In *The Family Reunion* Eliot failed to write an ideal dramatic verse, that verse which flexible and pliant, continuously adjusts itself to the slightest variation in intensity or tone.

We may agree with Eliot himself that the lyrical duets in the play are unsatisfactory; but to my ear the verse does differentiate between Agatha, Mary and Harry—and I don't believe that even Shakespeare differentiates between the verse used by his characters as much as critics like to pretend. On a minor point, I disagree with both Eliot and Mr. Donoghue who think that the Eumenides present an impossible problem to the producer. If they are not *shown*, there is no real problem.

*The Cocktail Party* Mr. Donoghue regards as an improvement, and he defends the comparatively prosaic verse on the grounds that "a medium whose success is measured by the quantity of 'poetry' or 'exalted speech' would be 'intractably poetic' and therefore quite useless for modern verse drama." My complaint is rather that most of the play gains nothing from the verse form, and that most of it would be better expressed in prose:

You know, I'm rather a famous cook.  
I'm going straight to your kitchen now  
And I shall prepare you a nice little dinner  
Which you can have alone. And then we'll leave you.  
Meanwhile, you and Peter can go on talking  
And I shan't disturb you.

Surely the Elizabethan practice of alternating verse and prose is far more effective. Eliot objects to it for a modern poet because such alternation calls attention to the verse. We may well agree that an audience today should never be aware that it is listening to verse—as, indeed, they are not when they are listening to



the mature plays of Shakespeare. The fact that Autolycus or the grave-diggers speak in prose does not make Perdita or Hamlet sound "poetical."

To Mr. Donoghue, Eliot's development towards the verse of *The Confidential Clerk* or *The Elder Statesman* has been a triumphant one. Certainly, if the sole criterion of successful dramatic verse is unobtrusiveness, Eliot deserves our congratulations. It was noteworthy, for example, that when *The Elder Statesman* was first performed at Edinburgh there were a few passages which struck the ear as poetical; but, by the time the play arrived in London, they had all been eliminated. The audience was spared that kind of embarrassment. I doubt whether Mr. Donoghue is right in thinking that Eliot has been developing his verse on "American" lines and that this accounts for the uneasiness displayed by English critics.

Important as the question is to potential dramatists, and grateful as we all must be to Eliot for his self-denying pursuit of unobtrusive verse, there are more important questions with regard to his last plays. Mr. Donoghue admits, albeit unwillingly, that O'Neill was a better dramatist than James: he was also better than Eliot. If Eliot had come to the theatre when he was still young, if his dramatic experiments had not been interrupted by the war, he might have developed into a better dramatist. But even though there is an element of drama in his non-dramatic poetry—perhaps in all poetry—he has never, one imagines, been greatly interested in other people, his religious views tend to minimize the importance of human personality, and he has tried to go "beyond the dramatic" (to use his own phrase) without going through the dramatic. He does not possess, as every dramatist must, negative capability. He can create a Thomas or a Celia because he can speak through them; but most of his characters never fully come alive. Several critics have commented on the failure of the aunts and uncles in *The Family Reunion*, and the more serious failure with the husband and wife in *The Cocktail Party*—it is too easy to contrast sainthood with a parody of marriage, and the true contrast would have been with a successful Christian marriage. But the characterisation throughout his last two plays is entirely flat.

A second fault is that of construction. The only one of Eliot's plays with a satisfying structure is *The Family Reunion*. In *The Cocktail Party* the last act is virtually an epilogue; in *The Confidential Clerk* the farcical plot continually works against the deeper meaning; and one has only to compare *The Elder Statesman* with *Oedipus at Colonus*, on which it is based, to see how feeble and ineffective Eliot's play is.

Eliot's farcical surface makes his plays theatrically successful on a certain level—almost a Noel Coward level. The deeper meaning of his later plays passes over the heads of the vast majority of the audience—a point which Mr. Donoghue does not fully realise. During a performance of *The Cocktail Party* a young woman in front of me gave a running commentary on the play for the benefit of her baffled mother. When Celia was sent to the sanatorium, the daughter confidently explained: "You see, she isn't fit to face the responsibilities of adult living." The groundling may not have fully understood *King Lear*, but he would not have preferred Regan to Cordelia.

Mr. Donoghue oddly prefers *A Full Moon in March* to *Purgatory*. He is justifiably severe on Fry, but he regards *The Dark is Light Enough* as his best play. But not even Dame Edith Evans could make that play very interesting. Fry had listened to his critics and purged his style of decorative imagery; but this imagery, however deplorable, was good fun at least.



If sound radio has a future, perhaps the future of verse drama lies in that medium rather than in the theatre. *Under Milk Wood* is more successful as a poetic drama than any of the verse plays discussed by Mr. Donoghue; and some of MacNeice's radio plays show what can be done to make a mass audience accept verse. Mr. Donoghue does not discuss MacNeice's translation of *Agamemnon* in which he seems to me to solve the problem of modern dramatic verse more successfully than Pound does.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in spite of the wide range of Mr. Donoghue's critical reading he does not allude to Peacock's *Poet in the Theatre*, perhaps the best discussion of the difficulties of the modern poetic dramatist, nor to John Middleton Murry's excellent criticism of Eliot's plays in *Unprofessional Essays*.

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